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Title:
Voices of inclusion : perspectives of mainstream primary school staff working with disabled children

Voices of inclusion:
perspectives of mainstream primary school staff working with disabled children

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Education

February 2007

81,142 words

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: A Lokellonidis ..... DATE: 28.04.07

To all the children I have taught
and from whom I have learnt so much

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank more people than I can list here. First and foremost all teaching and support staff from Welcome Park and Friendlymead Infant schools who took part in this research; quite literally, this project could not have happened without you. You all generously gave up your time to engage in conversations about inclusion; some of you also considered my work in progress and offered your comments. Staff at Welcome Park kindly endured my regular presence in school and Rachel (as she appears in these pages) made me feel at home in her class; thank you Rachel for this, and for the privilege of seeing you treat all children with such rare care and respect at all times, even when you must have felt exasperated by them. To all primary school staff who found (if not made) time to complete a questionnaire at such a busy time of year, thank you; I have felt humbled by the level of your engagement.

To my supervisors, Dr Anthony Feiler and Professor Tim Bond, who both engaged with my work in equal measure, thank you; I could not have spread my wings without you. To other staff and students of the Graduate School of Education, including everyone at the collaborative writing group, thank you; our vibrant research community has helped shape this work. To my friends and colleagues outside this department, including Isabelle, Julie, Ruth, Sue and everyone from the Bath research group, thank you; you have been a constant source of inspiration and support. To all other friends or strangers who found themselves engaged in animated conversations about disability and inclusion, thank you; our discussions have helped me develop kaleidoscopic understanding.

Above all, to Chris, Daphne, Phoebe and Zoe my most humble gratitude and infinite credit for tolerating a wife and mother who unrelentingly allowed academia to hijack home life. I love you all far more than I have been able to show you and hope that one day you (and I) will understand the smothering lure of this research.

Voices of inclusion:
perspectives of mainstream primary school staff working with disabled children

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Readers seeking at-a-glance information may also wish to refer to the following synopses:

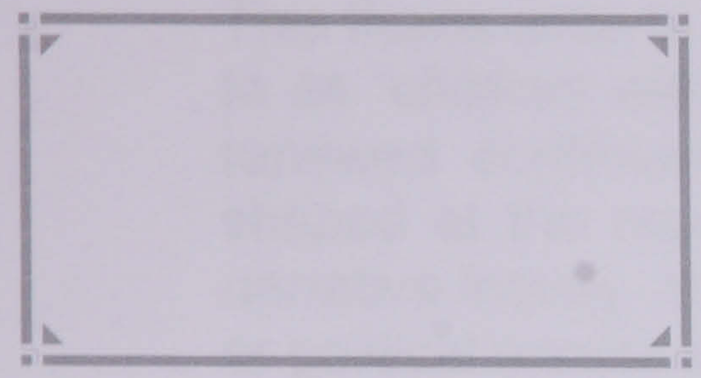
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBD	Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant

In addition, I have used the following initials for indicating participants' gender and role in school, when representing questionnaire responses (pages 115-152):

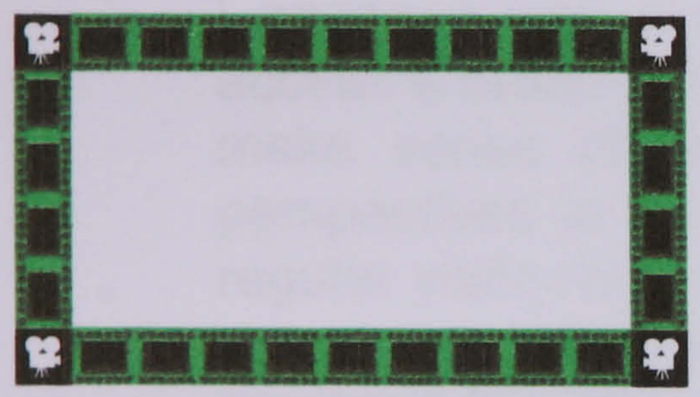
F	Female	A	Assistant Head
M	Male	D	Deputy Head
		H	Headteacher
		L	LSA, TA or other non-teaching role
		S	SENCO
		T	Teacher

LIST OF TEXT BOXES



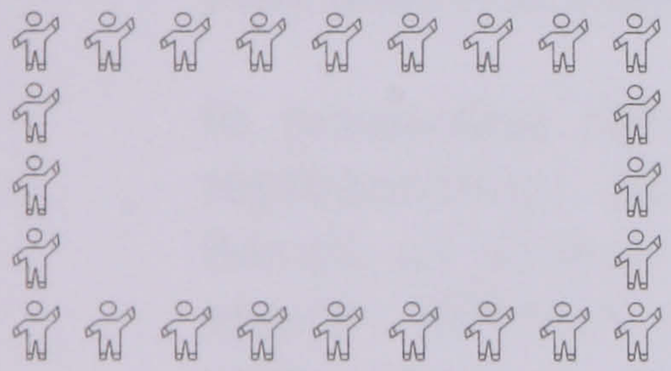
For narrating the story of inclusion

For narrating the story of this research



For examples from the lived experience of others

For introducing sub-sections



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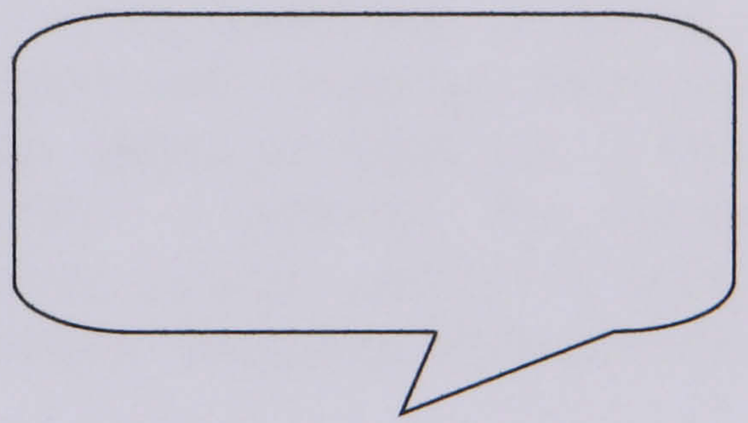

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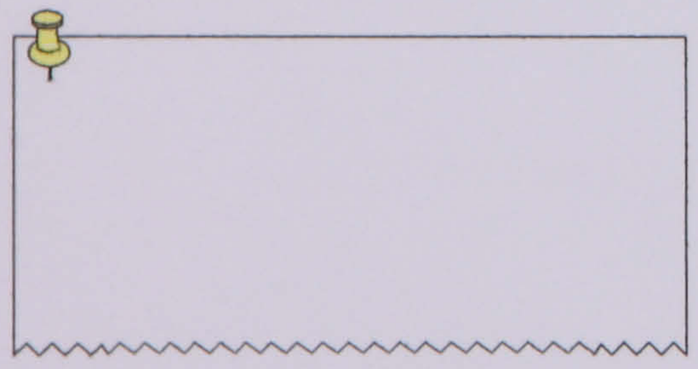

For my own observations, comments and reflections

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to re-present perspectives of primary school staff on including disabled children (often referred to as 'children with special educational needs') in mainstream schools. Conducted against the backdrop of renewed controversy over inclusive education, my research sought to explore practitioners' perspectives shaped at the crossroads of competing moral and pragmatic agendas. Located within the broader field of narrative inquiry, this study aspires to give a voice to key stakeholders who do not ordinarily enter the academic or political arenas where inclusion is debated.

I engaged with a range of innovative qualitative methodologies: I conducted a 'narrative survey', aiming to access a broad range of views anonymously, and used quantitative (SPSS) and qualitative (NVivo) software to make sense of this data. I then undertook a qualitative inquiry pursuing in-depth exploration of staff perspectives in two mainstream infant schools. I interviewed 22 teaching and support staff and became a regular visitor/helper in one class for five months attempting to share, as much as possible, practitioners' lived experience. Interviews were fully transcribed and qualitatively analysed (NVivo), using coding categories that emerged from the data. Keen to pursue joint interpretation of findings, I revisited one of the focus schools a year later and discussed research findings during a staff meeting.

In presenting the study I have employed postmodern writing practices, including non-linear and fictional representation, aspiring to create a text which is both scholarly and engaging. More than presenting an array of issues as distinct units of an intricate mosaic, this thesis seeks to resemble a kaleidoscope where issues appear different when viewed from different standpoints. I propose the application of "kaleidoscopic understanding", appraising a position in relation to the standpoint from which it is being held, in order to disrupt polarized positions and promote wider awareness of seemingly competing perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

This research project is firmly rooted in a moral standpoint which grants equal value to everyone, earned by virtue of being human; personal possessions, status or abilities are seen to have no part in determining personal value[1]. It is also based on the premise that education is a vehicle for preparing children for adult life; a premise which, I believe, can be much wider than generating the workforce of tomorrow, equipping children with skills-and-knowledge packages aimed at a particular notion of success in life. From this position, I see inclusion as a fundamental human rights question, to which education is called upon to find an answer.

After nearly twenty years of working in special education, I embarked on this project driven by a conviction that all children should enjoy a feeling of belonging to their local community and a perception that some children were not welcome in some settings despite an abundance of inclusion policies locally and nationally. I set out to explore the possibility that apprehension and/or reservations of mainstream school staff may short-circuit

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[1] In describing this moral standpoint, words are of notably limited effectiveness. For 'value' is as much linked with acknowledging importance as it is with pricing necessity; 'respect', another synonym on occasions, is more readily seen as needing to be earned, often on appraisal of the inseparable dyad of a person and their circumstances; finally, although one's skills or abilities may be 'valued' in different ways, they may not be unproblematically separated from oneself either. Welcome to a thesis that searches for meaning in places where meaning may have been taken for granted.

national and local policies stipulating mainstream schooling for disabled children. In the first phase of this project I attempted to access staff perspectives by means of an anonymous questionnaire sent to all teaching and support staff in all primary schools of one local authority that agreed to participate. In the second phase of the project I explored staff perspectives by interviewing teaching and non-teaching staff in two schools selected from survey responses; I also sought a flavour of staff's lived experience by becoming a visitor/helper in one class for at least half a day a week over a period of five months. During the course of this research I became increasingly aware that I seemed to be bringing to light a voice which had so far remained largely unheard.

This study does not claim to establish, prove or disprove any theory relating to staff perspectives on including disabled children in mainstream schools. It does not claim to identify any generalised ideological positioning of primary school staff, either as one collective standpoint or an assemblage of many. What it does claim to do is re-present the voices of those who participated in this project. Through casting its net widely and asking hundreds of practitioners a handful of questions, this research seeks to offer a flavour of the diversity of perspectives, including strength of feeling, and the complexity of issues involved. By taking this research into two schools, if not thrusting it upon staff's intense and demanding normality, I believe it to have carved a

window through which others can catch a glimpse of practitioners' perspectives; perhaps even created an opening for their voices to be heard. By rendering alternative positions explicit, I hope this research can make a contribution towards greater understanding of complex issues from multiple perspectives as well as facilitate resolution of a debate so far dominated by ambiguous or polarised positions, often conducted in the absence of key stakeholders.

This thesis is organised in two main sections: the first provides a historical context for this research while the second represents the study itself: its conception, implementation, outcomes and representation; relevant literature is cited throughout. In an attempt to make competing standpoints explicit, the first section is narrated from a standpoint which foregrounds disabled children's entitlements, while the second is presented in a way which foregrounds perspectives of mainstream school staff. Writing in both these sections is mostly displayed in text boxes, following a systematic mode where borders indicate content; a key to these appears on page ix. Each section ends with a short piece of fictional writing conveying key issues of the context and research respectively. 'Conversations with Sophia', fictional dialogues with an imaginary friend, appear at several points throughout this thesis and represent my rationale behind a number of methodological decisions and/or research claims. Such literary devices, further discussed in pages 276-295, have been shaped by my

compelling desire to generate a more engaging text than conventional academic writing would permit. Aesthetics have also contributed to representation choices, not least in determining landscape orientation for writing that appears in text boxes or in columns; I have maintained this throughout the main body of the thesis for reasons of uniformity and practicality. Appendices appear in portrait orientation as most represent documentation originally presented in this format. Issues of layout are further discussed in pages 277-278.

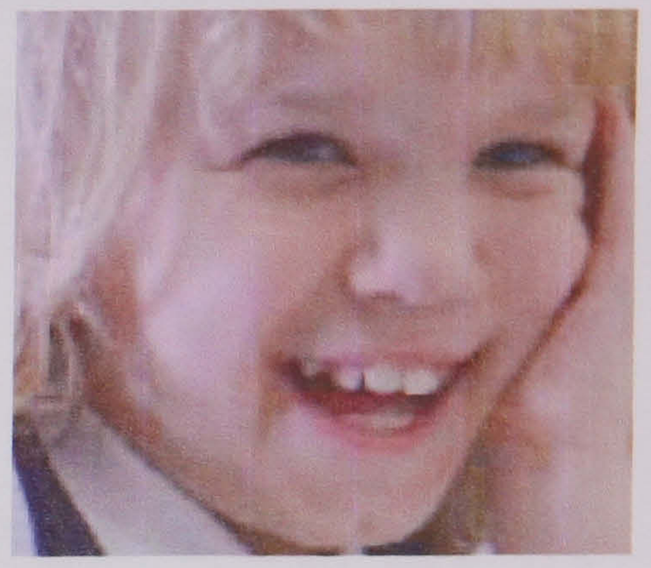
Finally, a word of clarification. The term 'disabled children' may invoke images of children in wheelchairs but this project is not solely about children with physical impairments; it is about any child who is being disabled from learning, whether temporarily or permanently, by his or her personal circumstances or context. As Richard Rieser explains, "The term 'disabled' includes people with: physical impairments; sensory impairments (deaf people, blind people); chronic illness or health issues, including HIV and AIDS; all degrees of learning difficulties, including specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and speech and language impairments; and impairment based on emotional and behavioural difficulties. It also includes people with hidden impairments such as epilepsy, diabetes, sickle-cell anaemia; children labelled as 'delicate'; people who identify as 'disfigured'; people of diminutive stature and people with mental distress. All are excluded by barriers, though not all have impairments" (Rieser, 2000: 141). This represents my conscious decision to adopt terminology

advocated by the disabled community: "Booth and Söder constantly refer to disabled people as people with disabilities. This is a linguistic attempt to deny the reality of disability - disabled people are people first who just happen to have a disability - and one which disabled people have rejected. We know that we do not just happen to have a disability or that we are people first; our disabilities are essential parts of self, to be affirmed and celebrated, not denied or relegated to an appendage; and as such, we demand to be called disabled people" (Oliver, 1992: 21).

Brief portraits of five children who are, according to current legislation, disabled are presented on the following page as a means of demonstrating diversity within current terminology. In the eyes of the law, a disabled person is someone who has "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" or a person with severe disfigurement (Disability Discrimination Act, 2005). We shall revisit definitions of disability on page 54.

Fade is a year 4 pupil at North Beckton Primary School. She is not able to use her own limbs very easily; in this photograph she is using a hoist to help her move her legs during a dance session.*

Terri is a year 3 pupil at Whitehouse Junior School. She survived a house fire as a baby and now has physical impairments and facial disfigurement as a result of the fire. When her Learning Support Assistant stepped back from one-to-one support, Terri's enthusiasm for school is said to have increased.*



Amy is a year 5 pupil at Gorsfield Primary School and has Restricted Growth. Her school has provided a special chair, handrails on walls and a coat peg low enough for her to access. Staff also ensure that anything Amy needs to pick up has been placed within her reach.*

Alistair is a pupil at St Clement's Primary School. He has been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Asperger's Syndrome and Tourette's Syndrome; a Teaching Assistant supports his learning.*

A child with Down's Syndrome; no details known.

Source: Bristol Inclusion Project Newsletter, issue 6, summer 2004.
A publication of Bristol City Council's Department of Education & Lifelong Learning.

* Source: Department for Education & Skills and Disability Rights Commission (2006)
Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in schools and early years settings

Extract from conversation with Sophia in cold drizzle **(Perceptions of disability)**

"I don't see how you think you can get away with this" she says as we walk in slight drizzle, discussing representation of my doctoral research.

"You don't see how I can get away with what, Sophia?"

"Publishing real children's photographs in your doctoral thesis. This is unheard of." Her disapproving tone disturbs me, but I welcome the opportunity to defend my choice.

"You have to remember that my research is not about the specific children in the photographs; this is certainly not compromising anonymity. I simply presented those as examples of who disabled children are."

"But you cannot include photographs in a research text, they invoke feelings!" she retorts. She has uttered that last word as if it were a disease. For a brief moment I consider referring her to contemporary writers legitimising the presence of emotion in research, such as Stacey Holman Jones (2005), Peter Clough (2002) or Andrew Sparkes (2002). Then again, there are more important issues to consider, so I opt to follow a different thread.

"They may well do and I, for one, would hope they do not invoke *negative* feelings."

"No, no, not at all," she rushes to defend herself *"I mean certainly that disfigured girl-"*

"Her name is Terri" I interrupt.

There is a long moment's silence between us.

"I am sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt, but she, too, would probably prefer others to see her as Terri rather than as 'that disfigured girl'."

"Point taken" replies Sophia nodding, perhaps more to herself than me. *"I guess if I was in her place I would be pretty annoyed if people rarely looked beyond my face."*

I consider pointing out how the language she chooses to use may shape, rather than merely reflect, her thinking, but lack of time prompts me to steer the conversation in a different direction.

"And I guess you wouldn't be too pleased if everybody felt sorry for you."

"Oh no, now you are going too far! We are all human! Whatever ideas you might have about equality, surely they cannot dictate what we feel for each other." As I expected, Sophia seems determined to defend a right to feel sorry for others.

"What people *feel* is for themselves to know and examine" I say calmly. "But if what they *demonstrate* is up for negotiation, I would go for respect over pity every time." I glance at my watch, aware she may miss my point as we rush through one mammoth issue after another; our time together is almost up and we have hardly engaged with these issues today. Funny how we rarely make time to discuss some topics. A thought enters

my mind and I grab the opportunity to render relevant to her the question of who decides who is disabled and on what grounds. "After all, John would not like it if others felt sorry for him, would he?"

"John?! But John is not disabled!" she laughs, promptly dismissing any such thought. She sounds almost offended at the suggestion that her husband might be disabled and I inwardly smile to myself pondering why.

"But is he as enabled as you or me to walk, run, move, lift?"

"No, you know he is not. But he simply has an issue with his back that limits certain movements. That doesn't make him disabled."

"So he suffers from a bad back, does he?"

"No, Artemi, he does not suffer from anything! Not if he is careful."

She probably thinks she has won this argument, just as I think she is not likely to seize and examine the thought I prompted. I am reminded of Ros Blackburn (1998: 55) who contrasted perceptions of "suffering" with her own view of being "blessed" with autism and of Lucy Grealy (1995) who died a few years after publishing a most candid autobiography without once referring to herself as "disfigured", but there is no opportunity to examine our language today. Our conversation soon comes to a close and, as we part company, Sophia seems relieved it is over. I wave her off, wondering if she will give any of these issues another thought...

Conversation with Sophia during a walk in the fields **(Overview of research)**

"So tell me about this research of yours" Sophia opens the conversation as we set off. We often take long walks together, both enjoying the physical exercise as well as the mental workout that our conversations generate. Today we have deviated from the established path and find ourselves exploring unfamiliar territory.

"How does it feel to have finished your thesis?" she asks.

I smile at her, hoping my eyes can speak the cocktail of joy, sadness, hope, apprehension and relief that my words cannot.

"I see" she says leaving me wondering what she has seen. *"But do tell me, how did you process all your data in the end?"*

"Well I guess I just dived in. And I swam and splashed and sank and choked and swam some more and eventually I came out the other end pulling this picture out, which I've now put on permanent display."

"This picture being The Research Findings?"

"Yes. My understanding of mainstream primary staff perspectives on including disabled children in their schools."

"Your understanding? You mean you are merely offering your interpretation?"

"Whose else?"

"You know that wasn't what I meant. The emphasis was on the final word: you undertake a three-year research project and all you offer in the end is an interpretation?" She screws up her face, as if uttering a dirty word.

"Well, *what* else then?" I sense she would have expected me to produce some modernist proof of an ultimate Truth discovered and presented. The idea that "processes that seem to be systematic and precise, do not render an interpretation objective" (Lieblich et al, 1998: 167) does not seem to have entered her mind. Perhaps I should recommend that she reads Phillips (1993) claiming that objectivity in the traditional sense is dead but that the term may be of use in examining the critical spirit in which research is carried out. Sophia's silence tells me she does not consider my question worth answering, so I rephrase my response. "What I mean is, yes, I *am* offering my understanding. With the emphasis on both words. But I think this is all a researcher can ever do, regardless of their field or methodology. I don't believe there can be a 'pure' outcome of a sense-making process, isolated from the process itself or, indeed, the processor." I consider how there may be multiple, often competing, understandings of the same event. For example, when education personnel recommend a special school placement for a child, they may perceive this to be in the child's best interests by considering, and providing for, his or her needs. By the same token, the pupil and/or their family may perceive

this as disrespectful[1] or as unduly privileging some needs (for example physical or academic needs) while devaluing others (for example social or emotional needs). Sophia remains silent, so I carry on. "In other words my understanding can only grow on the soil of my own mind, just as your understanding can only grow on the soil of yours."

"Speak for yourself, my mind is not soiled", she retorts. We have, once again, failed to engage in this conversation. Much though I desperately want her to see my point of view, I decide to drop the subject knowing that sheer persistence can be counterproductive; we are bound to revisit this in the future. Next time I must remember to frame the notion of objectivity differently; perhaps ask her to problematise the 'what do you see when you look out the window' question, in the hope she may share my 'anyone can see what I am seeing if they care to look from where I am standing' notion[2].

"Anyway, have you had your viva yet?" Sophia asks breaking the silence between us. *"I mean, I don't know, I* ***presume*** *theses are still being examined these days; are they?"*

"Goodness, Sophia, of course!" She still seems troubled at the perception of a blank cheque from pluralism.

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[1] Disrespectful in the same sense as perhaps you or I may feel put out if our employer transferred us to a setting solely staffed by other people like us: of similar gender, physical build, or descent.
[2] For the clarification 'if they *care* to look' I am indebted to Cathy Riessman (2004, personal communication).

"So how do they assess your work? Your thesis makes no mention of validity or reliability claims for a start." Like others rooted in modernity, she probably fears departure from it may turn 'The Power of Able' into 'The Tower of Babel'; that order perpetuated by ticket holders to the dominant discourse may disintegrate into chaos in the name of creativity. Not wanting to further alarm her by mentioning "legitimation crisis" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 54-63) I simply try to reassure her that an absence of particular words does not imply diminished quality.

"Not in so many words, it doesn't. But I have gone out of my way to describe my methodological decisions, explaining why I consider them 'fit for purpose', and justify my findings as authentic, if not reproducible."

"And where is your theory?" Sophia asks, this time conveying more puzzlement than criticism. I could try to explain that I rely on her for presenting much of it, but decide not to risk confusing her. I consider asking her what *she* means by 'theory', aware that Gary Thomas finds "the relation of signifier to signified dangerously unstable, given the importance attached to theory in education" (Thomas, 1997: 76); he writes of at least nine different meanings of 'theory' in educational discourse alone and that, whether seen as a tool for explanation and prediction or a device for organising knowledge, "theory structures and thus constrains thought" (ibid: 75-83). In the end, stifling a laugh at the coincidental appropriateness of her question, I merely reply:

"You see, for me, the word 'theory' does not refer to an abstract set of principles governing one's understanding, which one can generate or select and appropriate. To the contrary, inspired by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) I see 'theory' as a much more flexible and individualized construct which can loosely be described as a person's beliefs and assumptions underpinning his or her way of understanding the world; the grounds, if you like, for one's sense-making processes. In this sense, theory appears throughout my thesis."

Sophia's initial response is to taunt me:

"Oh? And what happened to you there? You, who so meticulously list page numbers for every single reference."

I lower my head. "I guess when you lock yourself away to finish your thesis and hear your viva knocking on one door and your potential employer knocking on another, you may have to abandon a search for a precise-" I interrupt myself at this point; being the author of this text, I wish to omit this and rewind our dialogue; Sophia's response becomes:

"Well that's all very well if we can talk it through, but on what grounds is your thesis going to be assessed?"

"Well as you can imagine, criteria for appraising qualitative research have been hotly debated over recent years. The University of Bristol publishes its own criteria for doctoral research and the examiners are bound to bring their understanding of these." I have uttered this statement without a hint of a smile so its ambiguity seems to

have escaped her. "In addition to these, I have worked to a set of criteria I came across during a training event[3]. So although unconventional in both design and representation, I believe my research does meet relevant quality standards."

"Ah well, good luck with it." (Did that sound dismissive or am I imagining things?) *"But you know I still can't understand why you chose to fly in the face of convention."*

"I couldn't if I tried; I have no wings" I snap back, beginning to lose my patience at our lack of communication. I doubt she understood the implication that she has arbitrarily ascribed an intention to my actions, but don't feel like explaining myself to ears that are hardly open. I reconsider and have a go anyway: "I *have* circumvented convention; but only as a means to a *different* end." She misunderstands again.

"It's funny you should say that. I think what you have done could be seen as a political act masqueraded as research."

I flinch. She must know that this hurt. I want to rub Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 4-20) in her face and yell that all social research is "persuasive, purposive, positional and political". Then again, that would probably alienate her all the more.

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[3] "Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence" published by the National Centre for Social Research (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003) puts forward four guiding principles and eighteen appraisal questions. The summary document can be found in Appendix A.

"Being positioned or political is not new to social research; it's just that it has only recently begun to be recognized and articulated." Sophia remains silent, so I continue: "If values enter into research, and I believe they do the minute you begin to consider what is worth researching, research inevitably becomes a political act." I wonder if I should refer to Egon Guba (1990: 24) who made this point more than fifteen years ago or Ernest House (2005: 1072-6) who more recently argued that all social science research is value-laden inasmuch as its fundamental aim to serve progress and improvement rests upon evaluative judgements; for example, researching a particular educational programme cannot but be couched within a particular value position on academic achievement. Perhaps I should quote Laurel Richardson instead, who refers to postmodern writers as "situated speakers", liberated from a perceived necessity to write "as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 961).

"And does your research-come-political-act do what you intended it to?" Sophia moves our dialogue in a different direction. I smile at the realization she has just helped me develop.

"I think it does more than that, actually." I cast her a quick glance but she is looking away. Perhaps her question was more disrespectful than I took it to be; I nonetheless continue answering it. "You see I set out to explore practitioners' perspectives, in the hope that this might help promote inclusion. Having done that, I find

myself wanting to fly the banner for mainstream staff as well." Regardless of what Sophia thinks, I still consider it essential to position myself: my commitment to readers dictates that I should explain the 'my' as much as the 'understanding', when putting *my understanding* forward.

Just a few years ago I had heard an LEA adviser advocating that *every* child should attend their local mainstream school; I refused to engage in conversation with him on the grounds that the suggestion was so ludicrous it could only be made in order to provoke. My position gradually changed over time, by engaging with these issues through training events, reading and conversations. Disability Equality Training had a profound impact on me. We tend to think of training courses as vehicles for acquiring knowledge or skills but this event was an opportunity to challenge assumptions. You may not need a course to learn that a person, the spiritual self, does not share physical impairments of one's body, or that every person should be as valued as any other; but I think we all need opportunities to chew on our beliefs and spit out what we find to be faulty assumptions. Regular opportunities, not just a one-off. So that we gradually chisel away at our beliefs, slowly shaping them through alert examination. Three years ago I embarked on this research passionately believing that *every* child should attend their local mainstream school and wishing others would engage in conversation about this... And here I am, leaving this project now, believing that disabled children *and* mainstream school staff have been misunderstood and/or misrepresented.

"Anyway, do tell me more about your research," Sophia interrupts my thoughts. *"Would you say you have done narrative ethnography?"*

"Have I done narrative what?" I utter, surprised at her apparent wish to pigeon-hole my research within an assumed-to-be-universally-accepted, if not arbitrary, typology. "You know I cannot lock myself or my research inside any paradigm, even if its edges are loosely, if at all, defined. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, please give me a break from your poststructuralist uncertainty," she despairs, *"I need to know which research field your work falls in, so I can understand it better."*

"Well in that case," I begin to construct my response as we speak, "I guess I *have* to call myself a narrative researcher. If narrative inquiry is about "trying to make sense of life as lived" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 78) then I have been a narrative researcher all my life."

"Well, yes, but what have you done in this research project?" Sophia persists.

"This research project? It is probably fair to say that here, too, my work is located in the field of narrative inquiry, because of its commitment to engage with the perspective of the other and of doing so by inviting people's stories and exploring, with the teller, connections between the stories that are told and the meaning-making that

emerges from them." I pause, aware that was a rather long sentence, then decide to leave it at that; why confuse her with definitions when there are so many and so diverse? Amia Lieblich and her colleagues propose that narrative research simply "refers to any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials" (Lieblich et al., 1998: 2). Cathy Riessman (1993: 1) suggests that "story telling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us", goes on to present a range of definitions for 'narrative' (ibid: 17-18) and suggests that narrative research straddles issues of facilitating narrative telling in interviews, transcribing for the purposes at hand and approaching narratives analytically (ibid: 54-63). Ruthellen Josselson and her colleagues use the terms 'qualitative' and 'narrative' research "somewhat interchangeably, as tends to be the current mode in the social sciences. Narrative research is a subcategory of qualitative research. By qualitative research we mean research that is inherently inductive and rooted in phenomenological or hermeneutic forms of inquiry" (Josselson et al., 2003: 3n). Asher Shkedi introduces the concept of 'narrative survey' and delineates narrative analysis by stating that "narrative categorization requires the analyst to create or adapt concepts from and relevant to the data rather than to establish groupings according to a pre-established set of rules and categories" (Shkedi, 2004: 92). All of this makes me a narrative researcher through and through. I smile to Sophia, raising my eyebrows and shrugging my shoulders, indicating there is little more to say.

"Narrative inquiry, then, and not ethnography?" she continues to seek a precise point to push the pin in the map.

"Well I wouldn't argue against anybody calling it ethnography, either, as this research clearly set out to understand the lived experience of others. If ethnography means "describing a culture and understanding a way of life from the point of view of its participants" (Punch, 1998: 157) then this is definitely an ethnographic study. But why conflate what a study seeks to do and how it seeks to do it? I would not call it narrative ethnography, no. For a start, I have not come across this term before and would not want to coin a term without a clear rationale for doing so and a meticulous attempt to describe what I wish it to convey. If nothing else, 'narrative ethnography' could easily invite assumptions of lengthy interviews exploring holistic experiences spanning well beyond people's professional lives, which this project has not engaged with."

"So how would you describe your research?" It feels as though she might be prepared to put the pin back in its box after all and settle for identifying a broader area on the map. We walk in silence for a while, as I try to separate a multitude of thoughts flooding my mind. We have touched on, though not exhausted, aims and methodology but there is a lot more to research.

Should I expand on aims? If critical theorists "have held out the hope that research could lead to emancipation and social justice for oppressed groups if research understood and addressed unequal relations of power"

(Smith, 2005: 88) and if they "seek to produce practical, pragmatic knowledge, a bricolage that is cultural and structural, judged by its degree of historical situatedness and its ability to produce praxis, or action" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 187) then perhaps I should call myself a critical theorist as well.

Perhaps I should expand on methodology and talk to Sophia about choices of representation; or maybe I should highlight my commitment to engaging with participants, claiming at least some common ground with approaches such as 'collaborative action research' or 'critical ethnography', which Miles and Huberman refer to (1994: 9).

There is a lot to say about research ethics, too, and my – gratefully inherited – commitment to ethical mindfulness (Bond, 2000) over and above adhering to relevant guidelines. Examples of my ethical mindfulness towards participants include striving for transparent communication, respect for people's time and privacy of views expressed, as well as safeguarding anonymity of people and institutions (for example, when quoting the words of participants I have not disclosed which school they work in, at a potential detriment to the clarity of research findings, so as not to render practitioners easily identifiable within their own workplace). Examples of ethical mindfulness towards prospective audiences of this research include rigour in research design and implementation and an aspiration to generate a text which is both scholarly and engaging.

Then again, perhaps I should speak to Sophia about ideological foundations of research and mention poststructuralism, its departure from claims to objectivity and comprehensiveness (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 1132) and its offer of an opportunity and a cause for reflection (Belsey, 2002: 107). In one sense nothing could be more apt, as throughout this project I have tended more to cultivating the seed of doubt than reaping any fruit that this may bear.

"Well...?" Sophia is still waiting for my reply and, I suddenly realize, we have almost reached the gate.

"Do you mean which field would I locate it in?" A way of expressing all of this is beginning to form in my mind.

"Yes, where would you place your research?"

"Well I have to say I don't see the research terrain as being neatly divided into fields and subfields. But if really pushed for an answer, I would say this research has grown in the field of narrative inquiry, from seeds carried by winds of critical theory, nourished by a poststructuralist ideology which privileges ambiguity, and has produced postmodern crops in the shape of non-linear texts and fictional representations. Does this answer your question?"

She cocks her head and smiles. *"Am I supposed to simply pick between 'yes' and 'no' now?"*

As we both burst out laughing, I put my arm around her in a welcome-to-poststructuralism gesture and we walk through the gate as I lead her into my research.

The storry of inclusion[1]

In this section:

the unfolding story of inclusion, as seen through national developments, is presented in this font within this border;

examples of the story's impact on individuals' lived experience appear in this font within this border;

comments on this story by practitioners, theorists and/or researchers are re-presented in this font within this border;

and my own thoughts and observations appear in this font within this border.

For example:

"It is frequently stated that wherever possible handicapped children should be educated in ordinary schools. No one disagrees with this assertion. The question is, what is meant by 'wherever possible'? This calls for a careful assessment of the child's needs and of certain essential requirements in the ordinary school – the knowledge, attitudes and teaching skills of the staff and the atmosphere and organization of the school."

I have deliberately not attributed this quote to its author yet. The appropriateness of an educational placement, this quote suggests, should be determined by considering a combination of within-child and within-school issues. Contemporary thinking in yesterday's language. When was this passage written? Would it surprise you to hear that it comes from a book entitled "Special Educational Needs"? Would it surprise you to hear that this was published long before the Warnock Committee was even formed? (Gulliford, 1971: 9-10) Professor Gulliford was one of fifteen people co-opted on to the Warnock Committee (DES, 1978: 1-2).

Join me, over the next few pages, in a journey through time which, although temporally linear, is substantively full of twists and turns.

Like an elaborate polyphonic fugue, recurring themes appear in different voices at different times and at various levels of exploration, potentially all seeking a harmonious resolution.

[1] Far from a typographical error, this is a deliberate attempt to convey meaning through economy of words. I do find this a sad story, a sorry story, plagued with weak directives, competing aspirations, dogmatic positioning, unacknowledged misunderstandings and gripping frustration.

In this section I wish to tell you the story of inclusion in England, to serve as a backdrop against which I can then present my doctoral research. Like other stories, it does not exist within specific boundaries: it has no clear beginning, other than the point from which I choose to start narrating; it has no clear end, as it perpetually evolves with time; and it may not be easily separated from other stories as, over time, it shapes and is being shaped by other national, local or personal stories. In other words, as the educational experiences of children are partly shaped by local and national policy, policy itself grows out of the myriads of life stories of those who are involved in planning, implementing or experiencing it.

One final disclaimer: as I prepare to present a story of inclusion in England, and as you prepare to read it, it may be worth remembering that this is not as straightforward as taking a snapshot of some landscape and then displaying the photograph. Armed with a camera, I could position myself at a specific distance from a physical object, 'capture' it and indisputably represent it. In attempting to describe events and experiences, however, although each observer cannot but occupy their individual standpoint, there is neither a physical object nor a physical distance between observer and life experience; to the contrary, the observer is likely to be in the midst of the experience. Any attempt to 'capture' and 're-present' it, therefore, is highly dependent upon one's perception, however diligent and rigorous the process of arriving at it might be.

What follows is my best shot, for now, at representing on paper my perception of inclusion in England, conscientiously written for you: my supervisors, examiners, and interested others who care about inclusion enough to read this.

Describing how we have arrived where we are 'today' has, over the years, come under a variety of names and starting points. In describing 'The Context of Reform', Ainscow (1999: 100-101) writes: "As with the rest of public education provision, schooling for children with disabilities had begun with individual and charitable enterprise." This is also the starting point for Sutherland (1981: 93) in describing 'The origins of special education'. Thomas and Vaughan (2004: 122) state: "It could be said that the legal context for integration and inclusive education in England and Wales began with the Education Act 1944 (...)" The Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act have been chosen as a starting point by Beveridge (1999: 16) in describing 'The Legislative Framework' for special needs provision and by Clough and Corbet (2000: 3) in presenting 'Routes to Inclusion'. Dyson and Millward (2000: 1) chose the 1997 Green Paper to begin describing 'The advent of inclusion' in England.

"My story begins
before I was born..."
(Dash, quoted in Brouwer, 1995: 10)

"I was between 10 and 11 years old when this change took place. It brought me into a new world of learning. We were taught in a new schoolroom, which by comparison with the dingy old place we left seemed like a palace to us. The walls were covered with maps and pictures. Our curriculum was extended to include grammar, geography, history, elementary mathematics, and the simple sciences. We were not troubled with the religious question, for, in order to avoid all controversy, the Board from the beginning banished the Bible from the school, not because they were irreligious, but because they believed that the teaching of religion was best carried out by the sects in their own Sunday Schools."

(Snowden, 1934, on his memories of "the passing of Mr Forster's Education Act")

Mass compulsory education in England came towards the end of the 19th century. After passing the 1867 Parliamentary Reform Act, which gave the vote to an additional 1.5 million men, the Chancellor of the Exchequer remarked that the government would now "have to educate our masters". The Education Act of 1870, Forster's Act, was the first ever Education Act and the first time the British government endeavoured to educate all children of all social classes. The Act divided the country into about 2,500 school districts and determined that rate payers would elect a School Board in each one, with a remit to raise and administer a school rate; each Board should examine existing provision for elementary education – largely provided by Voluntary Societies before then - and, if there were not enough school places for all children, could build and maintain schools out of the rates. Many School Boards opted to do so and, when it was deemed that enough school places had been created, the Education Act of 1880 made attendance compulsory for all children up to the age of 10. A decade later in a separate, though clearly related, piece of legislation, the 1891 Factory Act raised the minimum age of employment from 10 to 11 (Factory Act, 1891). Regular school attendance has been reported as "a habit gradually learnt over several generations and consolidated, perhaps, only with the collapse of much of the child labour market in the inter-war depression" (Sutherland, 1981: 94).

Isolated institutions aiming to serve children appearing different from the norm had started emerging from the beginning of the 19th century, alongside patchy elementary school provision, in the form of charitable enterprise. Typical was the London Society for Teaching the Blind to Read, which in 1838 opened a school in London and subsequently schools in Nottingham and Exeter (Sutherland, 1981: 93-94).

"Puny, pale-faced, scantily clad and badly shod, these small and feeble folk may be found sitting limp and chill on the school benches in all the poorer parts of London. They swell the bills of mortality as want and sickness thin them off, or survive to be needy and enfeebled adults whose burden of helplessness the next generation will have to bear." (Mary Tabor on London slum children, late 1880s - quoted in Sutherland, 1981: 94)

Voluntary organisations concerned with the education of the blind or the deaf had been independently campaigning for state provision; a royal commission was set up, chaired by Lord Egerton, which reported in 1889, recommending compulsory education for blind children aged 5-16 and for deaf children aged 7-16, while identifying three categories of mental handicap (imbeciles, idiots and the feeble-minded) and recommending the state system should make separate provision for the latter two categories. An Act of 1893 required education authorities to make special provision for blind and deaf children, while the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899 allowed local education authorities to create additional special classes and schools, but only if they wanted to, "for children 'who, not being imbecile and not being merely backward or dull children are, by reason of mental defect, incapable of receiving proper benefit from the instruction in ordinary schools' " (Sutherland, 1981: 95-96).

Legislation in 1902 replaced publicly elected School Boards with politically determined Local Education Authorities; five years later the Provision of School Meals Act allowed local authorities to spend rate money on school meals (this was taken up very gradually, however; by 1939 less than 50% of schools provided meals); in 1908 medical inspection of all school children became compulsory. Following the invention of 'intelligence testing' tools, the Mental Deficiency Acts of 1913 and 1914 placed upon Local Education Authorities the duty to ascertain children's mental competence and the requirement to provide appropriate education for all those deemed defective but educable (Sutherland, 1981: 97-98).

Round about the time my grandparents were born, current language included words which today would be deemed profoundly offensive. Words like 'defective', 'imbecile', 'educationally subnormal' or 'ineducable'. Nowadays not only have such words fallen out of use, the concepts they denoted are also largely questionable. Or are they? I recently heard a primary school teacher confidently talking about a child who 'cannot access the curriculum', a phrase widely used in schools today. I sometimes wonder if this phrase is nowadays used to refer to children who might have previously been labelled 'educationally subnormal', clothing the 'within-child deficit' concept in different words...

From the introduction of intelligence testing to the present day, opinion on the nature of intelligence has been divided: advocates for testing maintain that intelligence is genetically determined and can be measured; sceptics believe intelligence to be a social construct and intelligence testing to access little more than skills shaped by social, cultural, educational and, possibly, hereditary factors. Referring to Edward Boyle, Conservative Minister in the 1960s, Sally Tomlinson writes: "He had this idea that you created intelligence and I think this is what we do. Many children don't have the opportunity for intelligence to be created and then we blame them and their families for it. It always seemed to me quite pernicious to see intelligence as a fixed quantity."

(Tomlinson, 2000: 129)

Mary Baker was born in Woodlands, Dorset, in 1922. From birth she had a dislocated hip which led to severe problems in walking. At the age of 10 her mother died and the authorities sent her away from her father and brothers, to be brought up at the Hallaway Home for crippled girls in North London. She remembers: "When I came in through the gates, it was very difficult for me. Had no idea what I was going to do and what the place was like. It was huge and it was lonely and as I entered I entered a different life."

(quoted in Rieser & Mason, 1994)

"Looking back, they knew nothing about my complaint. I was expected to keep up physically with the other children and walk about when we went on trips, and that's just the time I should have been immobilised to enable the bones and joints to develop. They didn't know as much as they do today, unfortunately. The teachers were old cups of tea who taught us things like flower-making in the afternoon. (...) No one was expected to do GCE. You didn't have to try hard."

("Ann", quoted in Booth & Statham, 1982: 63)

The outbreak of war in 1914 necessitated a temporary halt to educational developments. An Education Act of 1918 raised the age for compulsory schooling to 14 and specified ancillary services, but remained largely unimplemented. In 1923 a specialist committee was set up to investigate the incidence of mental deficiency and make educational recommendations. The Wood Committee reported the incidence to be far greater than previously estimated and recommended significant changes to provision. It suggested that only children with IQs of 50 or under should be deemed ineducable and be referred to the care of the local mental deficiency authority (the cut-off point was previously an IQ of 70); children with IQs of 50-80 should form a new category, the "retarded" and be educated within ordinary, not special, schools. These recommendations, however, were largely ignored for nearly twenty years (Sutherland, 1981: 98-99).

Evelyn King was born in Wiltshire in 1945. She had cerebral palsy, which seriously hampered her muscle control; this made movement and speech exceptionaly difficult. At the age of five she was officially classified as an imbecile and sent to a mental handicap hospital. "I used to dream about me poor mum and dad, you know, I never used to go home, I used to miss all that. Never seen home in me life. But every time my mother and father used to come at the afternoon, I was happy then. Brothers and sisters didn't use to be allowed to come into the building, they only could look through the windows. I used to wave to them through the window but they wouldn't let them come inside. Couldn't do anything; go out, or anything. Stayed inside all the time."

(quoted in Rieser & Mason, 1994)

"My brother, Dominic, was born on 6 January 1960. In 1964, our parents received a letter from the Director of the City Council's Education Department, which said that having considered the advice they had received from a doctor, the Local Education Authority had decided that Dominic was 'suffering from such a disability of mind as to make him unsuitable for education at school.' (...) In 1989, Dominic and our mother, Joan, wrote a book called *Time on My Hands* (...) [in which] he described the many hobbies and interests which helped to stop him getting bored. (...) [Joan acted as his secretary and co-author and] since he could read it back to her, she was satisfied that it was truly a joint effort. How could someone capable as an adult of co-authoring a book be seen in childhood as unsuitable for education at school? Dominic was refused admission to school because he had Down's syndrome and what today would be called severe learning difficulties."

(Skidmore, 2004: xiii)

The Education Act of 1944 attempted to create a structure for the post-war British education system; it raised the age for compulsory schooling to 15, introduced selection by ability in secondary education and determined ten categories of children for whom local education authorities should offer provision: blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially hearing, delicate, physically handicapped, epileptic, maladjusted, educationally subnormal (moderate) and children with speech defects. Every child was expected to either be 'normal' or fall into one of the specified categories. There was one final category of children (educationally subnormal (severe)) for whom Health Authorities could make provision; this was usually in the form of Junior Training Centres, environments of a mostly caring/nursing nature, whose staff came from a health, rather than an educational, background.

"It is easy to forget that prior to the 1981 Education Act many parents were excluded from seeing reports on their children, they had no right to contribute to an assessment and it was not always possible for them to turn to anyone for advice." (Farrell, 2001: 5)

"I was sent to a boarding school for blind children in the mid 1960s, a time when there was no choice of inclusion in a local school. Whilst my parents travelled the 120 miles every week so that I always went home at weekends, I very much lived a split childhood between school and home. This had an impact upon my relationship with my younger sister who was at home and attended local schools. (...) I think that the mutual resentment of the other receiving seemingly special parental attention (her during the week and me at weekends and holidays) is a very hard dynamic to manage and can get in the way of a close adult relationship. (...) Parental relationships can be far harder - the understandable difficulty parents have of watching their children change out of their influence or observation and the consequent desire to cram the parenting into weekends. (...) There were no pastoral care staff until I was about to leave and they were inappropriately chosen. The numbers of people that have been severely damaged by that school is incredible - I did have loving parents (who can't hear any of the stories about it - too difficult), and I've worked on myself a lot, but there have been many severe mental health problems amongst peers."

Identity withheld, 2006; personal communication

I sometimes wonder whether the surprised gasp some people may have uttered 35 years ago at the previously unthinkable suggestion of including ESN(S) children in the education system, might be comparable to a surprised gasp some people may utter nowadays at the previously unthinkable suggestion of including some children in mainstream schools.

By 1970 there was a growing feeling that no child is ineducable and an Act of Parliament transferred the responsibility of providing for children labelled 'educationally subnormal (severe)' from Health to Local Education Authorities.

"Most Education Authorities were overwhelmed by their task and were at a loss to know how children of this degree of intellectual ability would fit in to their carefully constructed education system. (...) The Local Education Authorities' solution, as always with an Act of Parliament like this, was to take the course of least resistance. Junior Training Centres were renamed special schools and paramedics, along with some unqualified staff, became teachers." (Jupp, 1992: 14-15)

"The 1950s and 1960s saw a very substantial and very impressive expansion of special educational provision. (...) The feeling of isolation was reinforced by the fact that many providers of special schools were voluntary organisations and that (...) many residential special schools were established in adapted country houses remote from the urban populations they largely served." (Adams, 1990: 7)

In 1974 a Committee was set up, chaired by Mary Warnock, to review special education and make recommendations for future provision at national level.

The Education Act 1976 (Section 10) specified a duty for LEAs to educate handicapped children in mainstream schools, except where this was impracticable, incompatible with the efficient instruction in schools, or if it incurred unreasonable public expenditure. This had the status of coming into force on 'a day to be decided by the Secretary of State' but was never implemented, most probably in anticipation of a new, more far-reaching law expected to be drawn up after the Warnock Committee had published its Report (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 123).

Ladd retells the experience of a deaf professional giving evidence before the Warnock committee: "Throughout the day, various disabled people had given evidence in support of mainstreaming and [a Deaf professional] and 'her' interpreter (one of the very best in the UK at that time) were the last to give theirs. She signed at length about how the Deaf community cherished its schools, about the history of these schools which dated back some 200 years, and some of the implications for the quality of Deaf people's individual and collective lives if they closed. In the deliberations which followed (which were leaked to her by a sympathetic member of the Committee), it was concluded that, since the Deaf evidence was so very different from the rest, it was not only untrue, but the interpreter must have got it all wrong. Her evidence was therefore dismissed." (Ladd, 2003: 193)

"The last major enquiry in this field, which was carried out by the Lewis Committee, concerned methods of educating deaf children. That Committee[1] was set up as a result of concern about oral and other methods of instruction, an issue also raised in much of the evidence presented to us. It was frequently linked with concern about the limited levels of language and literacy achieved by many young people in schools for the deaf." (DES, 1978)

[1] *The education of Deaf Children:* The possible place of finger spelling and signing (HMSO, 1968)

I could have chosen to send my children to a Greek school in England, wishing to honour and preserve my family's cultural heritage. In all likelihood I would have felt rather disgruntled if the government, or the Local Authority, had decided to close the Greek school, on the justification that pupils achieved only limited levels of language and literacy in English.

"Although in my role of Deaf activist I have had many brushes with oralists, one example stands out in this context which illustrates the deliberate nature of their policies. In a meeting with a prominent oralist member of the teacher training establishment, in front of two witnesses, an interpreter and a TV researcher, the individual said: 'You've lost now. With the Warnock Report, we can put Deaf children in as many schools as we choose. And you [plural] will never be able to find them.' He wasn't far wrong." (Ladd, 2003: 193)

The Warnock Committee published its Report in 1978 (DES, 1978). This proposed a new way of conceptualizing children differing from the norm, introduced new terminology and recommended a new process for determining educational provision. The report suggested that children's educational difficulties are seen as a combination of within-child factors and aspects of the child's educational context; it proposed abolishing the eleven categories of handicap, adopting the term 'special educational need' instead, and perceiving this as a continuum of need; it recommended that most handicapped children should be educated in mainstream schools alongside their non-handicapped peers, in a process to be referred to as 'integration'; special education, it argued, should be seen as "additional or supplementary" as opposed to "separate or alternative"; it proposed a process of multi-disciplinary assessment - in which parents should become active contributors - that would determine whether a 'statement of special educational need' should be issued for any particular child; and it estimated that 2% of school children would receive such a 'statement' whereas 20% of school children would experience some degree of special need at some time in their school life.

"[T]he decision to regard 20 per cent of pupils as having special needs at some stage in their school careers is essentially both an arbitrary and a political one. It cannot in any meaningful way be said to be based on research." (Galloway, 1985: 26)

"The fact that a child has special needs does not necessarily imply that the child, as an individual, needs help. The most effective way to help the child may be to review aspects of school organisation, or teaching methods and resources." (Galloway, 1985: 3)

"Chapter 8 in the Warnock report gave the clearest message for ongoing support of special schools, and in retrospect there can be no doubt that the largely segregationist philosophy underpinning Warnock is partly to blame for slow progress in integration, and now inclusion, across the country." (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 121)

"[T]he label of 'learning difficulties' is not a description to be applied to people but a category that disenfranchises people from participation in society as valued and equal citizens"

(Armstrong, 2003: 125)

The term 'special educational need' has been traced back to the 1960s and the writing of a Headteacher of an infant school, in the introduction to a book entitled "Special Educational Needs". (Gulliford & Upton, 1992 - the same Gulliford as in the 1971 book of the beginning of this section)

"In very broad terms special educational need is likely to take the form of the need for one or more of the following:

* the provision of special means of access to the curriculum through special equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or specialist teaching techniques;
* the provision of a special or modified curriculum;
* particular attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place.

These are by no means exclusive and a child may very often have more than one of these forms of special educational need." (DES, 1978)

"The definition, as you probably know, which comes in the 1981 Education Act is the purest vicious circle you will ever know. A special need is defined as "any need that the school needs to take special measures to meet". Well, that is not much of a definition but it is the only definition there is. I think it is that vagueness actually which has led to what I have referred before, which is the very bad habit of talking of SEN children as a class, a category of children, all of whom would be expected to flourish in the same sort of environment."

(Warnock, 2005a)

"As to definitions of special needs, MPs should be very wary. Remember what Baroness Warnock's committee came up with 25 years ago. It defined a child with special educational needs as one with "a learning difficulty which calls for special education provision to be made for him". This tautology (generated because definition was being attempted of something shapeless) is responsible for many of today's problems"

(Thomas, 2005)

"From being an approach that attempted to pay particular attention to individuality, the term 'special educational need' increasingly became a super-label used to designate a specific group of pupils thought to have problems. (...) [T]he category 'special educational need' was now being used in a fairly indiscriminate way to refer to a large minority of the school population. Thus, from a policy that was intended to facilitate the integration of pupils experiencing difficulties in learning, we had effectively seen an increase in the proportion of pupils labelled and segregated, at least in the sense that they were perceived by their teachers as being different." (Ainscow, 1999: 27)

"Even though the eleven categories of handicap were abolished at the recommendation of the Warnock report, categorisation remains central to sense-making mechanisms in many aspects of our lives and so "pupils will continue to be categorised as having particular forms of SEN". Categories can help us get an overall picture of the child; formulate appropriate expectations; and access, for example, relevant support groups. On the other hand, use of categories may suggest that the problem lies within the child and/or that it is likely to remain unchanged, may lower expectations, or may serve to perpetuate the false assumption "that pupils with a certain condition or category require a specific form of intervention that is exclusive to this group." (...) "I would argue that we now have a greater understanding of the dangers of using categories but that, despite this, we will continue to use them."

(Farrell, 2001: 3-4)

I am inclined to agree with the poststructuralist assertion that there is neither simple nor linear correspondence between signifier and signified, for example between a word and 'its' meaning.

Daniels (2006) explores categorisation as a sociocultural process and ponders what kind of knowledge is being deployed and whose interests are represented in that knowledge. He argues that "the medical knowledge deployed in processes of categorisation is at one moment open to question and yet is taken as a total explanation of a complex phenomenon. (...) It can justify actions which remove the complexity from pedagogic problem solving."

(Daniels, 2006: 7)

Casling makes reference to the use of language and imagery in identity construction and suggests that "language speaks us rather than the other way round, and that our identities are constructed outside of some imaginary self or subject, and that that is why we have so little control over the imagery that we produce. However, these are primarily post-modernist assumptions, that are strange and not easy to make especially in the light of conflicting discourses that construct individual identity in such a way that it seems manifestly and tangibly true that this identity lies within ourselves. I am unable in this paper to take you from one discourse to another."

Casling, 1993: 209)

"A social category like 'emotionally and behaviourally disturbed', as well as purporting to describe those contained within its boundaries, functions to confirm a polarised, 'not like us', value-judgement."

(Potts, 1998: 19)

Numerous scholars have written extensively on 'special educational needs', arguing that the concept is no more than a social construct (Allan, 1996; Barton, 1988; Clough & Barton, 1995; Galloway, Armstrong, & Tomlinson, 1994; Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Tomlinson, 1982) Daniels et al (1996) explore ways in which schools themselves affect pupils' and teachers' perceptions of pupil identity, particularly in the area of "problematic pupil behaviour".

Referring to issues wider than terminology alone, Clough and Corbett suggest that "theories on inclusive education can seem confusing and complex, often because the language used disguises the ideas."

(Clough & Corbett, 2000: ix)

At twenty-seven years of age, Kirsty Arrondelle was considered a valued member of many groups in her local community: a keen and talented performer, accomplished dog handler and swimmer, holder of awards for voluntary service to the community and member of the Girl Guides Association for many years. Kirsty also has Down's Syndrome. When she was due to start school in 1981, aged five, her Local Education Authority wanted to place her in a special school. Her parents have spoken of their struggle to secure a mainstream place first in an infant and later a junior school, a process which contributed to the family moving to a different LEA. In 1985 they said: "We know that Kirsty had Down's Syndrome and therefore has special needs. It is because of our concern for the longer term - her life in the community *after* her education - that we see integrated schooling as a bedrock for later opportunities." (Rustemier, 2003: 7)

Many of the Warnock Committee's recommendations were taken up in the 1981 Education Act. This specified definitions of special educational need and provision, the role of ordinary schools in meeting special educational needs, the identification and assessment of need and the rights of parents in the decision-making process. The Act determined that a child is to be regarded as having special educational needs if he or she has "a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made"; it recommended that children with SEN be educated in ordinary schools, as long as this reflected parental wishes, did not hinder the education of other pupils in that school and was compatible with efficient use of resources; it specified that ordinary schools had a responsibility to identify, assess and provide for the majority of children with SEN, and outlined a clear structure for a multidisciplinary assessment informing the LEA's decision on whether to issue a 'statement of special educational need' which would clearly specify needs and corresponding provision and should be reviewed annually. Finally, the Act determined that parents should be informed and consulted at all stages and outlined an appeals procedure for cases of unresolved disagreements. (Beveridge, 1999: 16-18)

"In educational practices surrounding an expanding notion of disability [professionalism] has legitimised a discourse on an historically increasing proportion of children as different and thus as not belonging in regular classrooms."

(Fulcher, 1989: 181)

"In the English context, the Warnock Report (1978) emerged in social and political conditions where equality was still a policy issue and it was widely seen as breaking new ground, whereas it is, on closer examination, expedient about integration and contains a deeply entrenched professionalism as well as a medical- and charity-based discourse on disability. The main effect of the Warnock Report is to have established significant political conditions, in that it legitimized 20 percent of the school population as having needs outside the facilities ordinary schools generally provide. Thus it failed to make clear – a general failure of debate in this area – that *for a very large proportion of this 20 per cent, the notion of an impairment as underlying whatever labels of difference a student acquires, is inappropriate, and that to imply it is present, as any discourse on disability and its synonyms does, is an extremely political act."* (Fulcher, 1989: 181-2, emphasis original)

"The injustice felt by parents, children and young people and their advocates was enormous (…) The dishonesty was in the possibility to use the Section to camouflage discrimination by those in positions of authority, who (while the law remained as weak as it was) were under no legal duty to move towards integration and inclusion if they did not want to."
(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 124, writing on Section 2 of the 1981 Act, which specified that integration should be compatible with parental wishes, offer appropriate provision for the child in question that does not hinder the education of his or her peers and makes efficient use of resources)

"Another major part of the 1981 Act that worked against integration and against parents was the so-called 'appeals procedure'. (…) For the most part the 1981 Act's appeals machinery was a sham, being virtually controlled by LEAs who in effect investigated themselves and found in favour of their proposed special school placements in the vast majority of cases."
(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 124-125)

"The 1981 Education Act contained the seeds of its own destruction. It not only linked resources to Statements, but also extended the concept of SEN to include up to 20 per cent of children. It thus created a demand which LEAs were unable to meet and which the government had no intention of resourcing."
(Galloway, Armstrong, & Tomlinson, 1994: 34)

"By the early 1980s, success was visible. Deaf schools were changing to use sign language. But as fast as the schools changed, so too did the oralists succeed in having them closed down in the name of integration; little heeding or caring how those now-orphaned Deaf children coped in large hearing schools. In these infamous deeds they were assisted in four ways: [the Warnock Report, disabled people themselves, politicians and local authority officers.] (…)"
(Lee & National Union of the Deaf., 1992: 109)

"The Warnock Report and the Education Act of 1981 which stemmed directly from it both supported the principle of integration but the Act specified that there would be no extra money to make it happen and that it should not adversely affect the education of other children. While the Act gave parents some small additions to their rights, notably in terms of access to information, it added nothing to the rights and entitlements of citizenship for disabled children. Certainly it did not provide access to the same educational facilities as other children and, in fact, since its passage the number of children educated in segregated special schools has hardly changed at all (Swann 1991)."
(Oliver, 1996: 80)

"When E. was one month old I was visited by the borough paediatrician with special responsibility for children with disabilities. She said that E. would be going to a school for 'severely educationally subnormal children' and that a full time (special) nursery place would be hers at the age of two: weren't we lucky?"
"It's like when Dr Y. came round when he was first born. She did mention that there will be a special school for him to go to immediately he's two... I just couldn't take that in. I know I screamed at her."
(Parental perspectives quoted in Jordan & Goodey, 2002: 12)

"All over Britain, oralists and educationalists are putting more and more Deaf children in to hearing schools forcing Deaf schools to close. If they are not stopped, there will be no Deaf community left in the future when these young Deaf children grow up. (…) Oralism is the biggest single contributing factor to the destruction of Deaf individuals as first class Deaf adults, and oralism instead makes Deaf people third class hearing persons, one class below other ethnical and disabled groups. The oralists have an impossible dream, to make Deaf people 'normal' like hearing people. They have repeatedly failed in their crazy quest for the last 100 years. Those Deaf people the oralists claim to demonstrate the success of their dream were in fact hard of hearing – not profoundly Deaf."
(NUD 1985 Pamphlet "Deaf Community in Danger", reproduced in Lee & National Union of the Deaf., 1992: 113)

In response to the 1981 Education Act, the London Borough of Newham accepted the principle of 'integration' and established a working party to develop a policy; this has led to the desegregation of the Borough's education service. Their written account of this process includes: "There were differences of opinion within the deaf community about the nature of special education. Some people believed that deaf children should not be segregated from their hearing peers and that they should grow up as part of mainstream culture. Others were saying that mainstream education would destroy deaf culture. The problem was that the special school was not really able to develop deaf culture, mainly because the staff were all hearing and not competent BSL users. The alternative was to create a service that could build, develop and preserve deaf culture within the mainstream, and this was what the council proposed to do. (...) It was also made clear that if a deaf student would prefer to attend their local school rather than the resourced school they could."
(Jordan & Goodey, 2002: 24-25)

My husband and I have diligently cared to preserve our Greek culture while bringing up our children in England; we have also cared, however, not to favour our culture of origin at the expense of our children being included in the mainstream culture of our residence.

"I spent 9 months in a wheelchair many years ago due to surgery (...) I often experienced people assuming that I couldn't talk or respond to questions. I feel strongly that the more disabled people mix with non-disabled people the better understanding we will have of each other."

Learning Support Assistant (14 yrs experience) responding to this project's survey

In the 1980s and 1990s a major epistemological shift evolved, whereby disabled adults called upon all others to reconsider their perceptions and distinguish between the notions of impairment and disability; the former being attributed to a characteristic of the person, the latter to a social experience. The traditional way of thinking (that people are disabled by their physical or mental deficiencies and, consequently, need cure or management) became known as the medical model of disability; a proposed alternative (that people are disabled by inflexible societal structures and, instead, should be treated with respect and assistance) became known as the social model of disability. The two models are clearly described by Rieser (2000a: 118-123).

"The social model of disability identifies 'disabling barriers' rather than 'impairment' as the problem to be tackled. Disabling barriers are the attitudinal, economic, and/or environmental factors preventing certain people from experiencing equality of opportunity because of an impairment or perceived impairment. The term 'disability' is used to describe a social experience. A disabled person might say, therefore, "My impairment is the fact that I can't walk; I am disabled by the fact that the bus company only provides inaccessible buses". By contrast the medical model focuses on impairment as being the cause of limited opportunities and life chances."

(Disability Rights Commission, 2006: 5-6)

"Educational difficulties result from an interaction between what the child brings to the situation and the programme provided by the school." (Ainscow & Muncey, 1989: 11)

Presenting the medical and social models of disability in contrast to one another may lead you to see them as entirely incommensurable. This is neither my intention nor my view. To the contrary, from a position of unequivocally embracing the essence of the social model, I wonder whether a strong focus on societal structures as the main cause of disability may hinder communication with many who see a link between impairment and disability as obvious.

"Seeing children with profound disabilities (such as severe cerebral palsy) (…) in a mainstream class has had a profound effect on me. Whereas previously I found it hard to imagine how children with severe needs could be successfully integrated in mainstream, I now believe that this can not only be achieved but is also often preferable."

Class teacher and SENCO (15 yrs experience); pilot survey of this project

It is my view that we are, collectively, currently shaping a historical milestone. Disabled people were, in the past, intentionally removed from the mainstream of society; nowadays they are in principle entitled to the same opportunities as non-disabled persons. I believe it is up to us, non-disabled persons, to choose how to respond to the assertion that our established systems act as 'disabling barriers' for others. By doing nothing we would be resisting change, albeit perhaps passively. Unless we all reappraise our attitudes and practices, I fear we may be doing little more than issuing a ticket and keeping the door locked. Do we care? How would anyone know?

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced a number of changes to the education system as a whole: it introduced a National Curriculum and associated programme of assessment and devolved financial management from LEAs to schools. The National Curriculum was introduced as an entitlement of all children to have access to a 'broad and balanced' curriculum, with provision for this to be formally 'modified' or, if necessary, 'disapplied'. The Act also introduced formalised testing procedures at ages 7, 11 and 14, known as Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs); publication of aggregated results has been used as a means of comparing and judging school performance.

(Beveridge, 1999: 21-25)

"The Education Reform Act 1988 was to be the vehicle for bringing the discipline of the market into the process of schooling and the practice of teaching."

(Oliver, 1996: 81)

"I do not think that schools, especially schools in areas of social deprivation, have lost their will to help the children who come to school in desperate need. However for this spirit be active it is necessary for schools to be brave enough more or less to disregard the 'league tables', drawn up solely on the basis of examination and test results."

(Warnock, 1993: viii)

"There is evidence of the negative impact of the market style systems introduced in the 1988 Education Reform Act. This introduced more parental preference for schools whose academic performances are publicly disseminated and more management autonomy for schools with their funding based on pupil numbers. This makes for a system where schools can come into greater competition with each other. Whether this affects their intake of children with SEN depends partly on each school's commitment to serving all children in their neighbourhood."

(Norwich, 2002a: 486)

"Without wholehearted commitment by teachers to the reception of children with disabilities, particularly severe or complex ones, the most careful planning is unlikely to be successful."

(DES, 1978: 107)

The Children Act 1989 was introduced in an effort to reform and clarify the existing plethora of laws affecting children and forms the basis for the current child protection system. Section 17 charged local authorities with a duty to provide "services for children in need, their families and others". The importance of multidisciplinary work was emphasized and *The Framework for the assessment of children in need and their families* was a key guidance document published to help professionals with their assessments by providing a systematic way of identifying children in need and ascertaining the best way of helping those children and their families.

(National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2006)

This seems to be the first time that disabled children were included in the wider legal framework, without any provisos being attached.

In response to concerns that recent developments were rendering integration financially problematic for schools, an Audit Commission was set up to look at the state of special educational provision across the country (HMI, 1991); the findings fed into the 1993 Education Act, which replaced much of the 1981 Act, and the Code of Practice (DfE 1994)

This Act established a duty on educational authorities to place pupils with special educational needs, including disabled pupils, in mainstream schools as long as the placement is consistent with the wishes of the parents and:

- is appropriate to the child's needs
- does not conflict with the interests of other children in the school and
- is an efficient use of the local education authority's resources.

It also determined that each school must publish its special educational needs policy and ensure this is readily available to parents.

(Children Act, 1993)

The Code of Practice (DfE 1994), to which all schools should have regard but which was not legally binding itself, specified a five-stage model of assessment and provision and provided guidance and regulations for practitioners, including introducing the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo).

"It is very generally agreed that the issuing of statements by LEAs has fallen into disarray. There are two bad consequences of the present situation. First, a new spirit of litigation has taken over relations between parents and local authorities. (...) The second bad consequence is more serious. The greater the number of children issued with statements, the more it comes to be assumed that those children with special educational needs who are in mainstream schools and who have no statements are all right. (...) Such considerations (...) lead me to believe that statementing ought to be abolished." (Warnock, 1993: ix)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) held a World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, in June 1994. This was attended by representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations, all of whom signed up to *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 1994) proclaiming a strong commitment to inclusive education in principle and urging governments to support and resource this in practice. The British government was one of the signatories.

"Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system."

(UNESCO, 1994: ix)

Thomas and Vaughan trace the change in terminology, from 'integration' to 'inclusion', to a meeting in July 1988 when "a group of 14 people from North America who were concerned about the slow progress of integration in education brainstormed around a table at Frontier College, Toronto, Canada, and came up with the concept of *inclusion* to formally describe better the process of placing children and adults with disabilities or learning difficulties in the mainstream. This group included educators, writers, parents and disabled adults who had first-hand experience of segregated education.

Switching their thinking from 'integration' to 'inclusion' at this legendary meeting was indeed a radical gesture and the use of the word *inclusion* caught on quickly across Canada and the US. It took a few years for *inclusion* to be accepted more readily in the UK and elsewhere."

(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 89)

"All students with disabilities who live in the school district have the opportunity to be totally included in the regular classroom and the extracurricular activities of their school. The only criteria for a student to attend any of our six elementary schools, our middle school or our high school is they must be breathing."

(Ontario school district, quoted in National Center of Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 was the first of its kind in this country. For the purposes of this Act a person has a disability "if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." The Act provides clarifications and exclusions to this definition.

The DDA established disabled people's rights in the areas of: a) obtaining goods, services and facilities, b) buying or renting land or property and c) employment; it also ascertained the duty of individuals and organisations not to discriminate against disabled people. Although education was not covered by the part of the Act dealing with goods, services and facilities, it was covered under a separate section. There, the Act specified that every school must annually publish information on a) arrangements for the admissions of disabled pupils, b) steps taken to prevent disabled pupils for being treated less favourably than other pupils and c) facilities provided to assist access to the school by disabled pupils. The Act also determined that "In exercising their functions, the Teacher Training Agency shall have regard to the requirements of persons who are disabled persons for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995."

(Disability Discrimination Act, 1995)

"Access to the school" has been taken to encompass not only access to the physical environment but also access to the curriculum being delivered.

"Changes in the law bring real changes in practice for disabled people. But changes in attitude and awareness – big changes that cost nothing – are just as crucial (…)"

(Disability Rights Commission, 2001- NB no date printed on leaflet, acquired 2001)

Part IV of the Education Act 1996 deals with special educational needs and replaced the 1993 Act and the remaining of the 1981 Act. It set out at length the formal statutory assessment procedures, which remained essentially unchanged but strengthen parental rights and include both a time limit and a requirement for greater specificity when drawing up statements (Beveridge, 1999: 26-29).

"In 1996 a major consolidating piece of legislation was introduced and Section 314 contains the duty to integrate. As with earlier occasions, the 1996 Act was another failure by government to strengthen the duty to integrate when it left all four provisos in the law, despite a variety of amendments in parliament."

(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 126)

In a discussion of old and new views of integration, Oliver contrasts the notions of state vs process, changes in school organisation vs changes in school ethos, teachers acquire skills vs teachers acquire commitment, curriculum delivery must change vs curriculum content must change, legal rights to integration vs moral and political rights to integration, acceptance and tolerance of children with SEN vs valuation and celebration of children with SEN, integration can be delivered vs integration must be struggled for.

(Oliver, 1996: 84-90)

"In Britain legislation, at least since 1944, has endorsed the principle and philosophy of integration but has insisted that it could only take place where practical and reasonable, where it did not interfere with the education of other children or where it was commensurate with existing resources. Such let out clauses, for that is what they are, have meant that integration has not taken place.

What is needed, according to the new view of integration, is a moral commitment to the integration of all children into a single education system as part of a wider commitment to the integration for disabled people into society."

(Oliver, 1996: 89)

In 1997 the newly elected Labour government published the Green Paper: *Excellence for all children; meeting special educational needs (DfEE, 1997a)*. This, together with the subsequent *Programme of Action* (DfEE, 1998), signalled a powerful commitment to inclusive education and pledged to improve the statutory framework and procedures for SEN.

"By inclusion, we mean not only that pupils with SEN should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but also that they should join fully with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school"

(DfEE, 1997a: 44)

"The vast majority of responses to the Green Paper have been positive concerning the principle of promoting greater inclusion although many reservations have also been aired about the practicalities and resource implications that are involved."

(Beveridge, 1999: 32)

"The ultimate purpose of SEN provision is to enable young people to flourish in adult life. There are therefore strong educational, as well as social and moral, grounds for educating children with SEN with their peers. We aim to increase the level and quality of inclusion within mainstream schools, while protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who need it. We will redefine the role of special schools to bring out their contribution in working with mainstream schools to support greater inclusion."

(DfEE, 1997b: 43)

"The Green Paper and its subsequent Programme of Action have gone down in history, like the 1978 Warnock Report, as milestone publications and declarations of policy change. Like Warnock, the Green Paper both anticipated a change toward greater inclusion for *some*, while maintaining and endorsing continuing segregation for others."

(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 131, emphasis original)

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 identified two key duties for schools: a) not to treat disabled children less favourably than their non-disabled peers and b) to make "reasonable adjustments" in their attempts to accommodate the needs of disabled pupils. This Act strengthened the commitment to inclusion by deleting two of the provisos (that the child can receive the special education he or she requires and that there is an efficient use of resources), which had been in law since 1981. It did keep in place the remaining two provisos for inclusion in a mainstream school (that this is in accordance with parents' wishes and that it does not affect the efficient education of other children)

(Thomas & Vaughan, 2004: 126)

"There has also been a significant rise in the number of statutory assessments which have led to an increase in the number of statements. By 1995, 2.6 per cent of pupils in England had statements and this had risen further to 3 per cent by 2000, a rise of about 42,000 children (DfEE, 2000). This does not reflect a striking increase in difficulties and disabilities, it reflects rather changes in the pressures and demands placed on schools."

(Norwich, 2002a: 486)

Latest available national figures (Audit Commission, 2002b) suggest that spending on chidlren with statements absorbs 69% of SEN budgets. At the same time, one in five children in England and Wales (1.9 million children) were said to have special educational needs and one in thirty (275,000 children) had a statement. It seems that as statements are increasingly being sought to secure funding, resources available for children without statements are being further depleted.

The national picture is remarkably inconsistent, despite all LEAs being subject to the same national policies and legislation. In 2002 the London Borough of Newham was reported to have the lowest percentage of pupils in special schools (0.35%) whereas Manchester had the highest (2.64%) (Norwich, 2002b: 7). In ohter words, in Manchester c. 1 in every 38 children attended a special school and in Newham c. 1 in every 286. More recent figures suggest that the national picture remains patchy and, although the figures are lower, the contrast is even more extreme. In 2004 Newham remained the LEA with the lowest percentage of pupils in special schools (0.06%) while South Tyneside had the highest rate (1.46%) (Rustemier & Vaughan, 2005: 9-10). In other words, c. 1 in 68 children in South Tyneside attended special schools in 2004, whereas in Newham the figure was c. 1 in 1,667.

The Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales undertook extensive research into provision for children with special educational needs, describing SEN as "a very broad term, covering the full range of children's needs – from mild dyslexia to behavioural problems to complex medical conditions" (Audit Commission, 2002a: 4) and published two reports:

In its evaluation of the current framework, the first report *Statutory Assessment and Statements of SEN: in need of review?* (Audit Commission, 2002a) raised concerns that statutory assessment is a costly, bureaucratic and unresponsive process which many parents find stressful and alienating, and which leads to inequitable distribution of SEN resources and is at odds with inclusion (pp. 14-35). The report also identified strengths of the framework, in that it can provide a means of targeting extra resources, offer some assurance and support to parents and a formal recognition of needs (pp. 36-41). It made recommendations on how LEAs and schools can work more effectively within the current framework, proposed a mechanism for considering a school-based approach to funding as an alternative to the current framework and concluded that "key parts of the statutory framework no longer reflect the reality of today's system of education." (pp. 42-66)

In the second report, *"Special educational needs: a mainstream issue" (Audit Commission, 2002b)*, the Audit Commission states: "One in five children – a total of 1.9 million – in England and Wales are considered by their school to have special educational needs (SEN). Despite the significant numbers involved, they have remained low profile in education policymaking and public awareness. (...) Schools have struggled to balance pressures to raise standards of attainment and become more inclusive. This has been reflected in a reluctance to admit and a readiness to exclude some children, particularly those with behavioural difficulties. The existence of separate structures and processes for children with SEN may have allowed their needs to be seen as somehow different – even peripheral – to the core concerns of our system of education. This needs to change. (...) 'SEN' must truly become a mainstream issue."

"Integration of special education into the mainstream was regarded as a matter of radically changing schools rather than fitting children into the existing system. An independent report commented that having to cater for children with significant learning difficulties helped schools make better provision for all pupils. (...) There is no evidence that including all children has had a detrimental effect on standards. Newham's examination results improved considerably during the de-segregation period and pupils who were once labelled as having severe learning difficulties are now passing exams." (Jordan & Goodey, 2002: 6-7)

"The statement, I fear, has become little more than a passport to segregated schooling, which in turn becomes a passport to a segregated life."

(Jupp, 1992: 32)

"Now that the system of statements is being widely abused, both by parental demands and by LEA failure to allow the needs of the child to dictate what goes into a statement, it seems to me time to get rid of what may be an obstacle to good and imaginative education for children in need."

(Warnock, 1993: xi)

"A complex series of discourses formed a new power nexus around the issue of mainstreaming Deaf children and closing Deaf schools. (…) [T]he liberal/social-democrat move towards including disabled children in ordinary schools, which was supported by many of the disabled elite, but not of course by the Deaf community (National Union of the Deaf, 1992)" (Ladd, 2003: 157)

"(…) and was characterised by the financial cutbacks of the early 1980s onwards. Mainstreaming was conceived as a cheaper option than Deaf school placement, although, if sign language interpreters had been mandatory for each child, the cost would have in fact been greater." (ibid: 158)

"[T]he challenges facing Deaf communities in striving towards the equivalent of colonial independence are situated around language recognition in the first instance. The next requirement, that of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of Deaf people trained and equipped to run the 'Deaf Nation', is still dependent on winning the educational battleground (…)" (Ladd, 2003: 190)

"As a result of the fragmentation caused by Oralism and technology… it has created minorities within our minority group, differing cultures, languages and communication systems, attitudes and behaviour, leading to aggression and conflict towards one another"

(Ladd, 2003: 157-8)

A working group was established in 2002 to explore the role of special schools. The Report of the Special Schools Working Group, published in 2003, clarified that special schools are seen as part of the spectrum of provision for children with SEN and, therefore, form an important part of our education system. Special schools, the report said, are required to take a leading role in helping mainstream schools develop more inclusive learning environments. Mainstream schools will have a growing role in providing education for children with SEN (DfES, 2003).

Expecting disabled children to be able to fit in to existing mainstream schools may be as bizarre as expecting Eskimo children to fit in with Saharan families.

"The history of the twentieth century for disabled people has been one of exclusion. The twenty-first century will see the struggle of disabled people for inclusion go from strength to strength. In such a struggle, special, segregated education has no role to play."

(Oliver, 1995: 75)

"We must reject the legacy of the past that has excluded us. We have to recognize that all children and adults have a right to be included in mainstream education and society as a fundamental human right."

(Rieser, 2000b: 149)

"Increasingly, we disabled people are raising our voices to speak against warehousing of disabled people in special institutions and against the denial of basic equal and civil rights. We no longer accept segregation and paternalization of disabled people by medical experts, policymakers and administrative officials.

(Press Release by the European Network on Independent Living (1989), quoted in Oliver, 1996: 93-94)

"What proponents of full inclusion miss is that by defining it in terms of accommodating or responding to the diversity of learners, they are committed to arrangements required for a minority. (...) We need to remind ourselves that the basic human right is to an appropriate education, not an inclusive education. How far this basic right can be met by provision in the same settings, while respecting individuality, has still to be determined"

(Norwich, 2002a: 484, 500)

"Segregated schooling violates children's rights to inclusion and contravenes international human rights agreements and standards. Setting targets for reducing the population of special schools would enable the government to begin to fulfil its human rights obligations."

(Shaw, quoted in Press Release, 2003)

The moral dilemma of whether it is acceptable to shape provision for the majority irrespective of the needs of a minority, appears to remain unanswered. The authority to determine individuals' needs and appropriate provision also remains fervently, albeit implicitly, contested.

After a cycle of eight short-term special placements, each followed by an unsuccessful attempt to attend a mainstream school, 13-year-old Matthew who "has a number of problems including ADHD - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder" secured a long-coveted special school place in October 2004. His mother reported that the family lost their first appeal to a special needs tribunal but when Matthew tried to hang himself a few weeks later an emergency review was organised and a statement of special educational need issued. (BBC News, 2004)

Following the inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, the government introduced the *Every Child Matters* programme which, in turn, led to the Children Act 2004. This sets out the process for integrating services for children so that every child can achieve the five outcomes specified in the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper, to "be healthy, stay safe, enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being". This saw the end of Local Education Authorities and the introduction, in their place, of Children and Young People's Services.
(NSPCC Information, 2004)

At the same time, the government published its strategy for SEN, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004)

In October 2004 Ofsted published a report on the quality of provision in mainstream schools for pupils said to have special educational needs. The report praised a minority of schools but noted that "a high proportion of the schools visited in this survey have still a long way to go to match the provision and the outcomes of the best. They are generally not reaching out to take pupils with more complex needs, especially if their behaviour is hard to manage." (Ofsted, 2004: 23)

"Well the barriers are particularly the way that teaching and learning is organised, the curriculum and how they think that that should be organised, the materials that are in the classroom, the physical environment of the school and most importantly attitudes - attitudes of staff, attitudes of parents, attitudes of other children - and those are things that can all be changed. What can't be changed so easily is the child themselves, they can be educated but they will have their impairment for their whole life and that's why I think it's really important that they're part of the community, part of the school, part of the life that everybody else leads because there's plenty of evidence that suggests that if you go to a separate school then you remain separate for all of your life. And the achievement is very, very low in most of the special schools." (Rieser, 2004)

"It is as though all the efforts so far have focused on the critical and deconstructive step of removing the barriers that undoubtedly characterise the education system in its current form. Simply removing barriers, however, is unlikely to change to any significant degree, the life-chances of many children. If nothing else, new and more subtle barriers will simply emerge to take their place." (Dyson, 2000: 87)

I wish to reiterate my poststructuralist assertion, of no fixed connection between signifier and signified, here in relation to the widespread phrase "removing barriers".

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on all public bodies, including schools, to promote disability equality. It renders it unlawful for schools to treat a disabled pupil, actual or potential, less favourably than another for a reason related to their disability, without attempting to make "reasonable adjustments" to avoid placing disabled pupils at a disadvantage. In line with earlier legislation, the Act defines a disabled person as one who "has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" and provides clarifications and exclusions to this definition.

(Disability Discrimination Act, 2005)

The DDA's definition of disability has been criticised for focusing on an individual's medical condition, thereby endowing people with the indignity of having to prove they are disabled; perhaps most unpleasant in instances where the Act is difficult to interpret (for example, a man with terminal cancer who experienced incontinence as a result of an operation had to go to the Court of Appeal to determine that he is protected by the DDA). Such uncertainties, combined with potential psychological effects on disabled people, have been described as barriers to justice. The definition has been further criticised for rendering some discrimination legal (for example, a man who lost his job as a result of attempted suicide was not granted protection under the DDA because he could not establish that his depression would last 12 months or more) and therefore failing to protect a large number of individuals, some of whom may only have minor impairments. (Disability Rights Commission, 2006: 7-9)

"Fighting for inclusion when it comes to race and gender is obvious – races are equal and genders are equal. But to me, minds and bodies are also equal – the idea of educating someone separately because their mind or body is different seems ridiculous and like another form of apartheid. (…) There will be a time in the future when people will look back and say "wasn't it unbelievable that we used to discriminate against disabled children in that way in education?""

(Benjamin Zephaniah, quoted in Disability Equality in Education, 2003)

Casling explores expressions of pity and anger directed at him as Disability Equality Trainer. "It seems to me that processing the ambiguity of sympathy, care, and the concept of non-disabled allies might mean continually confronting at a hidden level the hate that society directs at disabled people."

(Casling, 1993: 210)

In February 2005, during a televised interview with Prime Minister Tony Blair, a member of the audience yelled "Tony that's rubbish" and went over to the desk, staging a very public protest against special school closures. As well as being broadcast live, this incident was widely reported at the time; the protagonist, Maria Hutchings, was described as a housewife exasperated at the threatened closure of her autistic son's special school.

In July 2005 Baroness Warnock published a monograph criticising the statementing system as "wasteful and bureaucratic", calling for the re-examination of inclusive education, seeing this as an overrated concept, and suggesting that the government funds an independent Committee of Inquiry into the current state of special education. (Warnock, 2005b)

"Here we see small class sizes and unbelievable attention to individuals. We can see children who are struggling to read or have problems with social skills getting that attention and it is great."
(Cameron, 2004; on special schools)

"But 25 years on, it is revealed that inclusion is difficult. Did anyone expect otherwise? Of course special schooling is more convenient for the education system. Children who make serious demands on teachers' time are removed to special schools. The real issue - if we believe that inclusion is the right thing to do - is about how to make it work. Here, some brave decisions are needed from policy-makers about funding .
The international evidence shows that although special school pupils demand 15 times as much money as those in mainstream, this extra spending, seen in the round, has precious little, if any, effect on their progress. Many special schools do indeed appear to be doing excellent work (…) but this is because they receive the lion's share of resources for special needs." (Thomas, 2005)

"I think it *has* gone too far. It was a sort of bright idea in the 1970s but by now it has become a kind of mantra and really it isn't working."
(Warnock, 2005c)

"Baroness Warnock is wrong when she says inclusion is not working. We know that there are parents, children and indeed schools who are not completely happy with the current situation. We need to remember, however, that the alternative Eugenic model of segregated education has failed many more children - through very low expectations, ghettoisation - in most seriously - and impaired ability of its recipients to engage in mainstream society when they leave. Our system of segregated education must end!"
(Alliance for Inclusive Education Press Release, 2005)

The issue soon entered party politics, with the Conservative Party pledging to stop the closure of special schools. (BBC News, 2005)

An infant school governor sought on-line advice on how to avoid admitting a pupil whose previous school raised concerns about the child's disruptive behaviour. In response, someone suggested that the previous school may not have been handling the situation well. (on-line discussion, March 2006)

My experience in the field leads me to believe that it is far from unusual for schools to feel reluctant to admit pupils said to have special educational needs, particularly when there are concerns about the prospective pupil's behaviour.

On 6 July 2006 the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee published the report of its inquiry in special educational needs provision in England. This report calls for a major review of SEN provision that would grant SEN a central position in the national education agenda. The report heavily criticizes the government for its unclear, if not conflicting, messages of commitment to inclusion and for its continued reluctance to review the current SEN framework, branded "no longer fit for purpose", despite Audit Commission recommendations four years earlier. It affirms the Committee's support for a system which includes all children in the setting that best meets their needs, preferably a good school within their local community. Finally, it calls for the government to commit to a national framework with local flexibility, clarifying its overarching strategy for SEN and disability policy; to seriously consider the impact of league tables on school admissions and act to separate the SEN from the raising attainment agenda; seek to develop more effective partnership with parents; and "radically increase investment in training its workforce", current and future, on issues of SEN and disability.

(House of Commons, Education and Skills Committee, 2006)

On 13 July 2006 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a report on the quality of provision for "pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities" in a range of settings. The report found that best outcomes are determined not from type but from quality of provision. "Effective provision was distributed equally in the mainstream and special schools visited, but there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere." The report also identified a number of weaknesses in provision, with regard to the impact of teaching assistants as key providers, support available for "pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)" and with identifying and monitoring good progress.

(Ofsted, 2006)

I know of no other official document within the past twenty-five years to have employed any terminology other than the conventional 'children with special educational needs'. While I applaud the divergence in the Ofsted report ("pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities"), I fear that this new phrase also seems firmly situated within the medical model of disability, apparently assuming educational difficulties to arise from, and reside within, the child (or possibly his or her family). A key difference seems to be whether a child is seen to 'have' or 'experience' difficulties; in other words, the extent to which a child 'brings' or 'finds' difficulties in school. To many this might seem like a futile word game; to others, such differences are of paramount importance and are thought to have a strong impact on children's identity, as perceived by themselves and by others.

Having carefully considered both recent reports, I find the first a strong endorsement of inclusive education in principle and, not withstanding the weaknesses it identifies, find the second a resounding endorsement of inclusion in practice, inasmuch as it locates good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools even for pupils with the most severe and complex needs. Media representation of both reports heavily focused on the issues identified as weaknesses of the current framework of inclusion, with titles such as "Too little help, too late for troubled children" or "Special needs education fails pupils" (see, for example, Asthana & Hinsliff, 2006; BBC News 12 July, 2006; Cassidy, 2006; Halpin, 2006b; Smithers & Woodward, 2006; Taylor, 2006; TES 13 July, 2006)

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) commissioned a study of 'the cost to pupils and staff of inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools'. Following publication of the report in May 2006 (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath, & Page, 2006) the NUT issued a press release (NUT Press Release, 2006) and has been reported to "dramatically reverse decades of support for 'inclusion'."

(Halpin, 2006a)

"When things go wrong, the issue is to do with the way the school is led, managed and organised. (...) Inclusion is not easy and our lives would be much easier if we selected out those who do not fit the "norm". (...) While schools and others continue to see disability as a problem, we will never get an inclusive education system. Segregated education serves to deepen a lack of understanding of difference, and is not helpful in creating a tolerant society. The Every Child Matters agenda supports inclusion in all its facets and there is no better time to open your minds and your schools."

(Frederick, 2006)

"Our fight for the inclusion of all children, however 'severely' disabled, in one, mainstream, education system, will not make sense unless the difference between the 'social' and the 'medical' or individual model of disability is understood."

(Rieser, 2002)

"Importantly, deafhood also asserts that attitudes towards deaf by *lay* non-deaf people, that is, hearing people situated *outside* of the colonialist administration, (…) can be positively influenced, once deaf communities are able to bring their own discourses to public notice, so that they can become allies in the decolonisation process."

(Ladd, 2005: 16)

"It is worth noting that special, segregated education has been the main vehicle for educating disabled children throughout most of the industrialised world in the 20th century and in Britain since 1890. In that hundred years, the special education system has failed to provide disabled children with the knowledge and skills to take their rightful place in the world; to use a current buzzword, it has failed to empower them."

(Oliver, 1996: 93)

"We suggest that the arguments for inclusion have to emerge less out of the kind of supposed knowledge so respected by 20th-century educators - less out of notions of success and failure (of children or of schools) - and more out of ideas about social justice and human rights."

(Thomas & Glenny, 2002: 345)

SUMMARY

Voices in favour of inclusive and of segregated education have been gathering momentum for years and perhaps are both now louder than ever. Hampered by incommensurable policies and problematic procedures, 'best practice' remains a heavily contested notion. This is perhaps inevitable, as it seems that the common goal of 'best educational provision' remains subject to competing interpretations. How can a consensus of educational opinion be reached, when some see disability as a characteristic of a minority of individuals that calls for specialist treatment, whereas others see it as the experience of some people in inflexible settings? How can 'best educational provision' ever be agreed upon, let alone delivered, when some see schools as a production line for the workforce of tomorrow while others see them as an unrestricted entitlement of all children and as means towards inclusive societies of the future? In this context, consensus of opinion would seem as unattainable as if a group of structural engineers were working together to design a construct, without addressing their diverse assumptions of whether this construct should stand on solid foundations or be fit to float...

Although my telling of this storry has to end in July 2006, the story itself continues to evolve. Like an elaborate polyphonic fugue, it is likely to continue seeking a way to its harmonious resolution. (This is not to say that one day everybody will hold the same view, but I anticipate a time when a consensus of opinion will be more readily recognised by all.) If the current state of affairs appears to leave a sour taste in one's mouth, it may be worth remembering that this would probably also happen if, for example, a Bach fugue suddenly stopped three pages before the end: the listener would be left feeling stranded mid-journey, without a sense of direction back to the home key. If the evolving story of inclusion can be seen as a collective polyphonic composition, perhaps this thesis serves to add another bar or two of music. I would like to hope it makes a contribution towards a modal change which, in turn, may take us one step closer to a harmonious conclusion.

"It could be said of me that (...) I have only made up a bunch of other men's flowers, providing of my own only the string that ties them together"

(Montaigne, 1580; quoted in Clough 2002: 80)

And, I would add, the selection of flowers.

I would like to bring this section to a close by offering a snapshot of life in an infant classroom today. What follows is a fictional account of part of a literacy session at the imaginary setting of 'Mara Santime Infant School'. This account is based on information I collected and events I experienced* during the course of this research project, as well as in my previous work of twelve years as a peripatetic teacher. This snapshot is offered from the point of view of three fictional characters: Carol Smith, the class teacher, and Alex and Rosie, two of her thirty pupils. Each person's viewpoint is represented in one column and interactions between people are shown by merging relevant columns. All three characters are constructs of my imagination but have been inspired by a number of real people I have encountered. Please see pages 278-291 for a discussion of fictional representation of research. I first came across the idea of concurrent columns to represent alternative perspectives in Speedy (2005).

Teachers and other practitioners who have read this fictional snapshot have commented on how plausible the story appears and how well it captures their lived experience. Some teachers have criticised Carol Smith's reluctance to engage with slow learners as unrealistic. I stand by my choice, largely on the grounds of my experience. For example, a teacher in whose class I regularly helped as a volunteer many years ago, occasionally asked somewhat apologetically "Are you sure you don't mind?" when asking me to work with the 'lower ability' group during literacy hour. I vividly remember my surprise at the suggestion that anyone would mind working with children I enjoyed engaging with.

*I need to clarify that Rachel, the teacher in whose classroom I was a regular visitor as part of this research project, could not be more different from Carol Smith who has succumbed to a perceived necessity for authoritativeness. I found Rachel to have a rare ability to sustain emotional contact with her children; bringing her into this piece of writing would not have served to highlight tensions which seem typical of contemporary infant classrooms.

Literacy Session at Mara Santime Infant School

"... and tigers I would like you to draw a picture in your books and write down at least one sentence about your weekend. So you all know what to do, you can go to your tables now. Well done Chris, you have sat beautifully on the carpet, you can give out the books today. Kamira and Jane, you have worked very hard too, well done; you can put the pencils on the tables. Yes, George, you can go to the toilet but be very quick and come straight back please. Off you go then."

When Mrs Smith had finished talking, Alex noticed that the other children were getting up from the carpet and moving to the tables for small group work. He spotted Kamira and Jane and joined them as they put out four pencils around the table. Chris brought the tray of exercise books and shared these out, prompting Alex to hope, once again, that maybe tomorrow Mrs Smith would ask *him* to give out the pencils or the books. Alex went over to the shelf and picked a better pencil than the one Kamira gave him, one with a nice sharp tip. He returned to the table, only to have Chris snatch his pencil right out of his hand. "Hey, give it back," Alex protested, "*I* got that!" But Chris simply said "*I've* got it now" as he opened his book. Alex, knowing better than to get into trouble for arguing over a pencil, went back to the shelf and picked the sharpest of the few remaining blunt pencils. Feeling quite despirited, he returned to his table and

Carol Smith had been teaching in year one for fifteen years. This morning, like any other morning, her literacy lesson consisted of whole class teaching, followed by small group work and ending with a plenary session. For today's small group work she would join her lowest achieving group, a prospect she was not exactly relishing. She did not mind so much if children were actually incapable of learning, perhaps through some sort of disability, and needed to hear things over and over again in order to learn. She could understand the need for this tedious repetition, and in any case it would probably be a non-teaching member of staff supporting such slow learners. But to have to engage in tedious repetition herself, just because children who were perfectly capable of learning did not apply themselves to the task, she found quite frustrating, if not exasperating. As was so often the case, these children were now demonstrating they were quite incapable of

Rosie sat down next to Joanne as usual and opened her book to the first blank page. She thought back to the weekend and her wonderful morning with dad in the park, especially the joy of being pushed really high up on the swings, and wished she was allowed to draw a picture like the tigers were. Never one to challenge her teacher's instructions though, she quickly got down to work: lions had to write at least three sentences about their weekend. Not noticing her tongue between her lips, she first wrote an "I", carefully making sure it rests neatly on the line. She felt very pleased with herself for remembering to place her left index finger next to it, making sure she left a gap between the words as she wrote them, like Mrs Smith was always reminding the children to do.

startled at the realisation that Mrs Smith was coming to sit down with them.

settling down to an activity without her support.

"Hurry up Alex, you haven't even opened your book yet!" she reprimanded him.

Feeling his knees turn into jelly, Alex sat down and opened his book. He did not like it when Mrs Smith was cross with him, so he hid inside himself.

Carol knew all about these children's delaying tactics and was determined to get them to engage with their writing, at least on the days when she sat with them.

"Well done Kamira, well done Jane, I can see you have already made a good start. Chris, I need you to come and sit down now please, this chair is just as good as any other. Alex: what are you going to draw today?"
"I want to draw a picture of mummy" he tentatively replied.
"But your last four pictures are pictures of mummy; don't you want to do something different today?"

Alex looked at his teacher, hoping against hope for some acceptance of his choice, but the look in her eyes made him want to hide further inside himself. If 'resentment' was part of his vocabulary, he would have a name for what he saw in her eyes. He plucked up enough courage for a tentative attempt at negotiation.

Carol made sure she fixed a smile on her face as she said that, knowing that she must not let Alex see her frustration. In any case, she thought while waiting for his reply, something is better than nothing; even if precious mummy is all he ever wants to draw, surely he can be persuaded to *write* something different today.

"But I *want* to draw another picture of mummy." he uttered.
"All right then, you draw another picture of mummy, and then I'll help you with your writing."

Rosie then slowly sounded w-e-n-t in her mind, carefully writing each letter on the line, then placed her index finger after this word too. She confidently went on to write "to" and then "the", put her finger down for a space and carefully worked out p-a-r-k and wrote each letter down, this time making sure the tail of the 'p' came down well below the line. She even remembered to draw a nice big fullstop at the end and sat back to admire the fruit of her labour: "I went tothe park." Wonderful! Mrs Smith *would* be pleased! She glanced across to Joanne's book and noticed her friend was just finishing writing "I went to the park" as well. 'Strange,' Rosie thought to herself, 'I didn't see her there, maybe she went to a different park.' She was itching to ask her friend if she really had been to the park, but disciplined herself not to. Mrs Smith doesn't like children talking when they are supposed to be working. Lots of other children were talking right now, but *she* would not disobey her teacher. Just then Joanne looked up at her and Rosie quickly whispered before she could stop

He should have seen it coming. Why, oh why, didn't he agree to draw something else? She might have let him off the writing then.

At that point Carol noticed the noise level in her classroom and considered it to be way too high.

herself: "Did you really go to the park?" "Yeah!" Joanne replied with bulging eyes, then bent over her book once more.

"Class nine there is a bit too much noise in here; please remember to work quietly." As the children's voices subsided, Carol added in a quieter voice: "Thank you children, this is much better. It is easier for everybody to work when it is quiet, and it means that children in the other classes can also get on with their work."

Alex startled at the loud voice intended for the whole class, then went back to gazing at his open book. He could not quite understand why this was happening. Mrs Smith is a grown up who can understand a lot of things. How can she not know that he can't write? And why does she keep asking him to write when it is so obvious that he cannot? He can see that other children can do it, but most of them are older than him. Maybe when he is six he, too, will learn to write and then he won't mind writing any time Mrs Smith asks. His teacher's finger tapping his book jolted him into action; he picked up a red crayon and spent the next minute drawing a big circle, two dots for eyes and an enormous smile; now for the hair:

Carol saw that Alex was still idle and softly said "Go on then, let me see your picture of mummy", before turning her attention to Chris and the girls. She often felt frustrated that children who were underachieving seemed to be putting the least effort in learning. Alex was very much a case in point; this 'can't do, won't try' attitude never failed to frustrate her. He will just have to buckle up if he is to learn. Once or twice she tried to catch his eye, then tapped her finger on his book while helping Kamira sound out 'w-e-n-t'. Satisfied that he now engaged with this activity, Carol went on to help Jane sound out and write 'grandma', before returning her attention to Alex.

Rosie felt as bad as if she had personally been told off. She really must try harder to do as she is told. She looked back at her writing and noticed the space that was missing between 'to' and 'the'. This would never do! She drew a line through both words and wrote them again, leaving between them a gap wide enough to fit another word in. She took a deep breath, then started on a new line: 'I', 'w-e-n-t', 'on', 'the' and there she hit her first real difficulty: how on earth do you write 'swings'? Rosie concentrated hard, wrote down 's' and then 'w', then got up, walked to the shelves and returned with a dictionary. As she walked past Joanne, Rosie noticed that her friend had crossed out the whole of her first sentence and was writing it out again, even though

"That is a lovely picture of mummy Alex; would you like to do some writing now?"
"I still can't do it" he tentatively stated the obvious.
"You'll never learn if you don't have a go" she replied, also stating the obvious.
"But I'm not big" Alex tried to stand his ground.

"Please give it a try" Carol said, determined not to give in to avoidance tactics.
"No, I'm *five!*" Alex replied, generously trying to explain. Sensing that this was not getting him anywhere, he added "Sean is seven. He's home today."
"Is he? Why, is he not very well?

For a split secondAlex was taken aback; he wasn't expecting Mrs Smith to show any interest in his brother's health during work time. Quickly coming to his senses, he grabbed the opportunity to talk about Sean and his bad cough over the weekend. As she wanted to know, he told his kind teacher all about Sean's coughing keeping him, Alex, awake last night, how mum had given them both cough medicine but baby Ryan couldn't have any because he was too young. Alex noticed his teacher glancing up at the clock on the wall and wondered if this unforeseen oasis he found himself in would save him from writing today.

Carol knew better than to be drawn into an irrelevant conversation during small group work, but sensed a golden opportunity: find something to write about *and* build up rapport, potentially encouraging Alex to overcome his inhibition for writing. But what could she prompt him to write with words like 'cough' and 'Sean' that are not spelt phonetically? Then, remembering that Alex *does* know how to spell his brother's name, she thought perhaps she could get him to write 'Sean is not well today.' After little more than a minute, she turned to the whole class:

Joanne had not forgotten any spaces. "Why did you cross that out?" Rosie whispered. "Because it was wrong" Joanne confidently replied. Rosie glanced again and, unable to spot the mistake, returned to her own work full of admiration and respect for her friend who clearly knew something that she, Rosie, did not. She found the start of the 's' page in the dictionary and flicked through a few pages, until she saw the picture of a swing and scrutinized the printed word. 'Of course', she thought to herself as she copied out the word, 'this is how you write swing'. She proudly added a 's' at the end, feeling quite proud that she no longer thought she needed to write a 'z'. She sat back and admired her work: "I went on the swings." Great! One more sentence to go now, and Rosie was already beginning to glow at the anticipation of the praise Mrs Smith was sure to give her.

"Boys and girls we only have five minutes left. Are you all listening? Class nine, please put your pencils down and show me ten fingers. Everybody, please. Mary, Joshua, please show me ten fingers; thank you. Class nine, we only have five minutes left. When the big hand on the clock points to number three, it will be time for everybody to go and sit on the carpet. Please try and finish the sentence you are writing." Then, turning to Alex, she added softly:

"I would like you to try and write just one sentence Alex."
"I still can't do it" he reminded her, sorrowfully pushing his book away.
"I tell you what then: shall I write something and then you trace over it?"

Rosie concentrated even harder. After a quick mental check that what she intended to write hid no nasty surprises, she carefully sounded out

Alex had been waiting for this moment. Still somewhat puzzled by the mystery of why Mrs Smith, an intelligent adult, did not choose the obvious activity straight away, Alex agreed to trace over whatever sentence his teacher was suggesting. Tracing over letters was fine, knowing what letter to write was what he couldn't do. He heaved a sigh of relief, finding himself on familiar territory at last. In fact, he soon realized, it would have been easier to just write 'Sean' himself, without having to try and go exactly over each of Mrs Smith's letters. He spent the next few minutes attending to what he knew he could do well, tracing over each letter in turn. He rehearsed in his mind the sound of each letter as he wrote it and, once again, contemplated how difficult, bizarre even, writing is: why do we write 'is' when we mean 'iz', or how does one know that 'Alex' has one 'l' and 'well' two? He let out a wide yawn and carried on to the last word, knowing better than to ask tricky questions and risk finding himself on dangerous ground again. He simply longed for the day when he would know exactly which letters go together for which words.

Carol turned her attention back to the other 'tigers', relieved that she managed to get Alex to do some writing. She noticed him starting to write the 'S' from the bottom and working upwards and made a mental note to give him some more handwriting practice. Right now it was more important to get some writing in his book. Carol reminded Kamira to leave a space between her last two words and wrote 'video' for Chris to copy. She made one final attempt to remind Alex how each letter is supposed to be formed, softly chanting 'top to bottom and flick, then cross' or 'down up, down up. Time was almost up and he still had two words to go.

and wrote each word in turn: 'd-a-d-e', 'p-u-sh-t', 'm-e' (here she changed her mind and left 'really' out, opting for an alternative that seemed easier) 'v-e-r-e' and finally 'h-i'. She knew she had to rush if she was going to show her work to Mrs Smith before they all went back to the carpet, yet still managed to make her writing as neat as she possibly could and ensured each letter had the right number of flicks, dots or tails going up or down as appropriate. Rosie double-checked that she had remembered all her spaces and all three fullstops and leapt out of her seat to go and show Mrs Smith. She hurried to the tigers' table and stood over her teacher's shoulder, feeling ten feet tall.

"Mrs Smi-ith" Rosie all but sung, with the rising and falling intonation that most children called her in.
"Not now please Rosie; please go back to your seat and finish your work ."
"But I *have* finished" replied Rosie, bursting with pride.
"Well done Alex, just one word to go now." Carol gave Rosie a fleeting glance and, returning her gaze to Alex's book, said to her "Please go back to your table, Rosie, I will work with lions some day soon. We have a few minutes left, so see if you could write one more sentence for me; there's a good girl."

Extract from conversation at the spiral stairway

"So are you suggesting there is no shared vision?" I ask my friend.

We are now minutes away from the door, moving forward slowly, carefully negotiating the steep and narrow steps, winding down today's conversation about the current state of inclusive education in England.

"No, not at all" she replies.

I wait for her to explain but she presses forward in silence, not seeming to notice, or mind, the ambiguity. There is nowhere to hold on to and I need to focus on my footing. Before she reaches the door I ask again:

"Do you mean you are not saying that at all, or that there is no shared vision at all?"

She momentarily stops, turns to look at me and smiles. Then she turns away again and moves on, negotiating the last few steps. I follow, tired and breathless.

"Are you not going to answer me?"

She turns to look at me and smiles again. For a few long seconds we stare at each other in, and surrounded by, silence.

"You make it all sound so simple" she says before turning back and opening the door. We both go through.

The previous and following pages have intentionally been left blank, as if surrounding this page by silence.

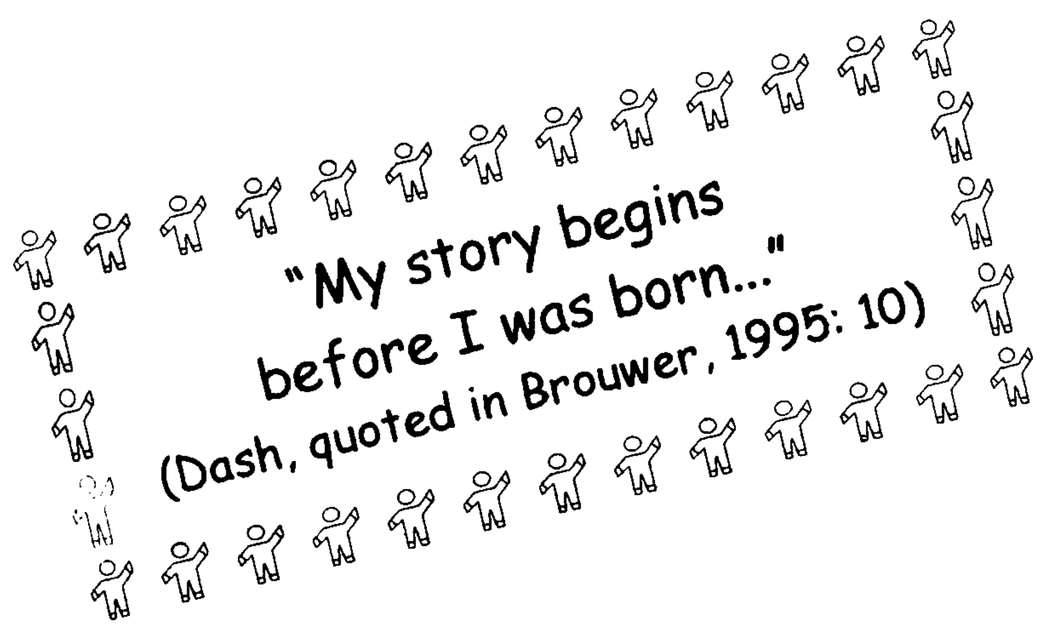
The story of this research

Introduction to the project

Text boxes new to this section comprise blue borders for the unfolding story of this research and red borders for introducing subsections.

I set out on this research project in October 2003. Prior to that I had spent the best part of twenty years working in special education; first teaching in special schools, then as a peripatetic teacher working with pre-school children said to have special educational needs and supporting their transition to school. During my teaching career I had moved:

- from accepting, without questioning, the status quo
- to believing that us professionals know best and that special schools are the only sensible place for children with special needs
- to beginning to appreciate disabled people's point of view and to question some educational decisions
- to believing that *all* children should be included in mainstream schools, on the grounds of human rights, and that it is a matter of time for others to reach the same conclusion as a shift in collective thinking takes place over a number of years.



Prior to embarking on doctoral research, I had undertaken a smaller scale project at Masters level, also focusing on perspectives on inclusion of mainstream primary school staff. This earlier research highlighted discrepancies in terminology and indicated that similar issues and expressions of support could be interpreted in a variety of ways (Sakellariadis, 2003). I looked forward to this project exploring such differences further.

I entered this research project on the one hand believing that inclusion had for over twenty years been strongly endorsed by legislation, while on the other hand perceiving a degree of apprehension from some mainstream school staff at the prospect of including a child 'with special educational needs' although this was rarely, if ever, openly expressed. Had inclusive policies been falling on fertile ground, on deaf ears or on a bit of both? My initial aim was to investigate the possibility that negative attitudes of staff might "short-circuit" plans to implement inclusion. My initial plan was to explore this through three avenues:

- survey a large number of staff on their perspectives on inclusion
- interview a smaller number of staff on their perspectives on inclusion
- share, as much as possible, in staff's lived experience of inclusion in mainstream schools.

"Without whole-hearted commitment by teachers to the reception of children with disabilities, particularly severe or complex ones, the most careful planning is unlikely to be successful."

(DES, 1978: 107)

"Unless schools themselves really want to provide education for the most needy of their pupils, as well as the rest, these pupils will be excluded, forbidden to take examinations and in every way marginalised."

(Warnock, 1993: viii)

"Teacher attitudes can be the fulcrum determining the ultimate success or failure of an inclusion programme"

(Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001, quoted in Wilkins & Nietfeld, 2004: 115)

"Negative attitudes to disability are, arguably, the single biggest barrier to disabled children accessing and benefiting from mainstream education."

(Miles et al, 2002: 27)

"Society's lack of knowledge, misinformation and negative attitudes lead directly to the exclusion of disabled girls and boys from education."

(ibid: 39)

"On the assumption that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it, a great deal of research has sought to examine teachers' attitudes towards the integration and, more recently, the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school."

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002: 129)

I embarked on this research project as an experienced special educator. In other words, I inadvertently transported into the project my individual assortment of skills, knowledge, experiences and ideas. With me also came an inquiring mind - avid interrogator and processor of new ideas - and a conviction that engaging with a research text, as a human act, simply cannot be devoid of emotion.

I kept a research diary throughout the three years of this project. Apart from a helpful thinking tool, this has also proved invaluable in assisting me to reconstruct the story of this research.

"When trying to understand people - *people*, as distinct from gases in a test tube - we each have to use our own humanity, recognising our 'failings', our frailties, misunderstandings and prejudices. These 'failings', it increasingly seems to have been realized in the last 20 years or so, have to be used in our understanding of the predicament of others, and not 'controlled out' in our investigative procedures."

(Thomas & Glenny, 2002: 360, emphasis original)

Being a novice researcher, I was frequently comfronted with 'how do I .....?' questions. My quest for answers took me to a multitude of research methods texts, as well as to my own cerebral space of abstract reasoning. Aligning one source of answers with the other proved far from straightforward; with my supervisors' support, I allowed myself not to feel constrained by conventional research methods.

Traditionally research is presented as a neat, linear process, unburdened by uncertainty and doubt, implementation obstacles, or methodological dead-ends. Jane Speedy has referred to the bulk of the research process as "the muddle in the middle" (Speedy 2001: 10) and I believe the explicit reference to all of the 'muddle', including setbacks, enhances the authenticity of research reports. In this thesis I attempt to present an honest 'warts-and-all' account of my research process, in the hope that this may facilitate greater understanding of this text as well as be of benefit to fellow researchers. Research is also conventionally reported as if having occurred in a vacuum, dissected from the researcher's everyday life. It would feel hypocritical for me to do that. As well as a researcher, I am also a busy mother, singer, school governor and more. Sick children, broken 'cellos, home repairs, dying pets and computer malfunctions (to name but a few unforeseen challenges to an already busy schedule) may not directly impact on research findings, but can certainly squeeze the research process in awkward corners and strange hours of day or night. I shall not weigh this text down with personal details, but consider it important to disrupt the concept of research as bounded or uninterrupted process, distinct from other aspects of one's life. I have provided a flavour of this in Appendix B.

My thinking was informed by relevant research. I offer here an overview of most significant studies; relevant extracts also appear at appropriate points throughout this thesis.

> "Consistently, the experience of having taught children with any category of handicap is associated with the greater willingness to accept such children in one's own class, while inexperience of such children is associated with the lesser willingness. (...) It should also be noted that the association between experience of handicapped pupils and a welcoming attitude towards them is an imperfect one; there are examples of teachers who have had handicapped pupils in their class who would be reluctant to repeat the experience or even in some cases say that they would refuse to do so."
>
> (Croll & Moses, 1985: 56)

> "It should be noted that teachers were not responding to the principle of integration or to an ideally-run integration programme but to the idea that a handicapped child might be introduced into their classroom with no major changes in staffing or other provision to help them cope. A number of teachers indicated that they were more favourable to the principle of integration than was in fact borne out by their reactions to the idea of having a handicapped child in their own classroom."
>
> (Croll & Moses, 1985: 54)

Paul Croll and Diana Moses (1985) report on a large scale study where 428 junior school teachers in 61 schools in 10 LEAs across the country, as well as the headteachers and remedial teachers in these schools, were interviewed. The study also looked at the academic performance of a large number of children with and without special educational needs. With regard to their attitudes towards integration, interviewees were asked questions such as "Have you ever taught a child who could be regarded as handicapped in a regular class?" and "How well do you feel you coped?" Teachers were also asked how they would react to having pupils with these and other handicaps in their classes by selecting from 'enthusiastic', 'fairly favourable', 'cautious', 'reluctant' or 'refuse' with regard to each of the following 'handicaps': 'educationally subnormal (moderate)', 'maladjusted', 'partially hearing', 'partially sighted', 'child in a wheelchair', 'other restricted mobility' and 'other physical handicap'.

As well as finding yesteryear's language interesting – including referring to all teachers as 'she' – I was intrigued by the extent of what seemed conceivable at the time: the possibility of blind or deaf children, if not those then referred to as 'educationally subnormal (severe)', in mainstream schools is conspicuously absent. I also noted with interest the authors' personal positioning: "We must be careful not to take it for granted that integration is always the best solution for a child or to assume that a positive attitude towards integration is always the most desirable response from a teacher, particularly given the difficult physical and social contexts within which some of the teachers in the sample worked" (Croll & Moses, 1985: 58). I am also intrigued that the decision to ask personal questions on a sensitive and contentious topic seems to have been regarded entirely unproblematic.

Angela Reese explored, by means of postal questionnaires, mainstream nursery and primary teachers' views on teaching hearing impaired pupils. Over fifty teachers preparing to teach a hearing impaired child were surveyed a) on their concerns at the beginning and b) on their reflections at the end of the academic year. Responses indicated that for most participants concerns were minimized in the light of experience (Reese, 1995).

Peter Clough refers to "a triangular link between teacher attitudes, the policies within which they work and the resources which are attached to realising these policies." He refers to his earlier (1991) survey of nearly 1,000 mainstream teachers' perspectives on SEN, in 16 schools in 4 LEAs, which had found considerably more positive attitudes to inclusion in an Authority which had invested more heavily in resources to support inclusive education. He proposes that the more teachers work within inclusive settings, the more sympathetic they become to working with a wider range of achievement.

(Clough, 1998: 12)

In a more recent study, Croll and Moses (2000) revisited many of the schools of their original study and interviewed close to 300 junior school teachers, 48 headteachers and 46 SENCOs, as well as gathering data on more than 2000 children and on issues such as liaison with support services and parents and views on the inclusion of pupils with various sorts of special needs in mainstream schools.

"Special schools were seen as places with special expertise and special resourcing where these children could have their needs met appropriately."

(Croll & Moses, 2000: 62)

"Mainstream primary teachers and headteachers are virtually unanimous in seeing a continuing role for separate special schools. Many think that there is a case for expanding that role. This belief is based mainly on a pragmatic sense of the existing pressures on mainstream schools and the perceived impossibility of teaching a mainstream class and at the same time meeting certain sorts of special educational needs. (...) There is no commitment among the teachers in the survey to inclusion as a generalized educational ideology, and there is a strong awareness of the pragmatic case for special schools to reduce the pressures on the mainstream. But, at the same time, there is a good deal of inclusive practice in the classrooms in the study, with teachers committed to meeting very considerable levels of educational needs in the mainstream." (ibid: 65)

It is unclear whether participants' views were put forward on the grounds of experience of, or assumptions about, provision in special schools. It is also unclear how researchers approached sensitive or contentious issues during interviews, to minimise the possibility of the dominant discourse weighing down participants' responses.

Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) undertook a survey of mainstream teachers' attitudes to inclusion, by means of a postal questionnaire. They developed an instrument comprising mostly Likert-type scales and sent this to all teaching staff in a sample of 12 primary and 4 secondary schools in one LEA; most of these were "deliberately selected from schools identified as actively implementing inclusive programmes." (Two schools opted out of the quantitative phase of this project, agreeing to participate in a later qualitative phase, on the grounds that the instrument "would not reflect a clear picture of their practice, which they claimed was truly inclusive".)

The researchers adopted a theoretical model according to which change in complex systems depends on five parameters: vision, skills, incentives, resources and action planning. They propose that: participants appeared to be generally positive towards the overall concept of inclusion; pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) were seen as causing more concern and stress than other types of SEN; teachers with active experience of inclusion held significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusion than those from randomly selected schools; and issues such as gender, age and teaching experience were not found to be significantly related to respondents' attitudes. From responses to three open questions, the researchers gleamed that: a) more support, training and resources could make the participants' responses more positive; and b) changes advocated by participants in the classroom and school environment involved changing the physical environment, reducing class sizes and being given more time.

(Avramidis et al., 2000)

I was intrigued to find more signs of personal values in this research paper:

"Unfortunately, the NAS/UWT immediate response to the Green Paper (...) took the view that inclusion would be feasible for pupils with physical disabilities, but stated that the inclusion of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties could be a "big problem", an "absolute disaster" and bring "untold misery".

(ibid: 192)

In a small scale project Ritu Chaudhry Jain set out to investigate practitioners' perspectives on inclusion and carried out semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers and 3 headteachers in two mainstream and one special school sharing the same site. Among her findings, she reports that "all the participants unanimously opposed the idea of full inclusion especially for children with complex learning difficulties and with emotional and behavioural difficulties."

(Jain, 2002: 57)

A recent study commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) visited 20 schools (of which 9 were secondary and 2 special) and carried out observations and structured interviews in each school with 5-10 teachers, the SENCo, the Headteacher, 5-10 pupils and up to 8 parents; questionnaires based on interview questions were left in each school for completion by teachers who had not been interviewed.

The study argued for "more intelligent and targeted resource provision", stated that "inclusion can only work in a culture of collaboration in which there is sharing of resources and expertise" and concluded: "The most striking aspect of this study is the goodwill of teachers who believe in inclusion and try to make it work but do not find their goodwill repaid by the level of professional support they receive. It is time for a thorough review of policy and practice."

(MacBeath et al, 2006: 67)

International studies exploring practitioners' perspectives on including disabled pupils in mainstream settings also attracted my attention. I expected findings to have little direct relevence to this project, as they would be exploring perspectives of staff working within different contexts, but I was very keen to scrutinize methodological decisions of other researchers investigating similar questions.

In a study exploring Spanish teachers' beliefs on inclusive education, a modified version of the "Inclusion Attitudes and Beliefs" (Ellis 1995*) survey instrument was used. 100 teachers were asked to complete a survey comprising 15 items exploring Benefits and 15 exploring Concerns towards inclusion, all on a 5-point Likert scale from 'strongly agree to 'strongly disagree', followed by 3 open questions.

(Cardona, 1999)

*Referenced as unpublished manuscript.

In USA Cindy Praisner conducted a survey with over 400 elementary school principals. She used questionnaire responses to explore relationships between attitudes to inclusion and variables such as experience of inclusion, type of disability, participants' training and placement choices for disabled students. (Praisner, 2003)

In Italy Cesare Cornoldi and his colleagues undertook a study to determine the nature of Italian teachers' attitudes to inclusion after 20 years of inclusive education in the country. 523 teachers from Northern and Central Italy responded to a survey which was based on common core items taken from a review of previous surveys conducted in USA. The authors report on participants' support for inclusion in principle and concerns about inclusion in practice.

(Cornoldi et al, 1998)

Investigating whether teachers' attitudes towards their disabled pupils vary in line with severity or obviousness of disability, researchers conducted a survey and used statistical procedures (chi square test) to explore attitudes of attachment, concern, indifference and rejection. They also offer recommendations for improving teachers' attitudes towards included students with hidden and obvious disabilities.

(Cook, 2001)

In researching potential stressors of inclusion for teachers in Queensland, Australia, Chris Forlin developed a measuring instrument, the *Teacher Stress and Coping Questionnaire* (TSC) on the basis of focus group interviews. In the part of the questionnaire that related to potential stressors, 75 issues were raised covering eight categories of potential stressors; teachers were asked to select their response from a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'not stressful' to 'extremely stressful'. The remaining three parts of the instrument sought information on the teacher, school, provision and included child(ren) and on a range of coping strategies. Questionnaires were sent to all regular class teachers in Queensland teaching disabled children; 571 questionnaires were returned.

(Forlin, 2001)

Quantitative phase: Introduction

In the first phase of this project I set out to conduct a survey of staff views, aiming to access a broad range of views anonymously and provide a context for the qualitative phase. The quantitative phase of this project was shaped through fervent interrogation of academic texts, fuelled by genuine desire to find the tools to access potentially guarded perspectives.

Before engaging with issues of questionnaire form or content I considered the issue of sampling: whom should I ask to complete the questionnaires, for the results to be meaningful? Research methods literature clearly stated that the size of a representative sample of a target population can easily be determined by applying a mathematical formula, while its representativeness can be established by careful consideration of all parameter characteristics of the population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000: 93-104). The chicken-and-egg nature of establishing representativeness seemed too hard to ignore: researchers recruit representative samples drawing on knowledge generated by previous research, also employing representative samples. Furthermore, proposed characteristics of a population extrapolated from knowledge about a sample only seem meaningful if such characteristics are normally distributed; when it comes to exploring people's mindsets generalisation seems quite out of place.

"While we can make good use of existing research methods in the service of replicability, data disaggregation and representativeness, we must not forget that human lives and human causality are not composed of layers of regression coefficients."

(Oppenheim, 1992: 18)

"[T]o what extent are the methods of measurement which have been so successful in the physical sciences still appropriate when we have to deal with behavioural and social phenomena? This remains a very controversial question on which the last word will not be spoken for a long time to come."

(Oppenheim, 1992: 154-155)

Keen to conduct the survey within as large a group as possible, so as to increase the likelihood of accessing views rarely held or voiced, I decided to target all teaching and learning support staff working in mainstream schools of one Local Education Authority, considering this group to represent none other than itself. That said, I believe this group of practitioners to be in no conceivable way dissimilar to mainstream school staff in other Local Authorities that maintain both mainstream and special schools and have adopted a policy to promote inclusive education.

Unable to find an appropriate measuring tool readily available, I decided to find out how to construct an instrument which would enable me to represent practitioners' perspectives. I engaged with standard research methods literature on survey design (Cohen et al., 2000; Fink, 1995; Oppenheim, 1992; Sapsford & Jupp, 1996) and ended up living through considerable and prolonged turmoil, unable to reconcile the received wisdom of conventional methods with my inner voice of reason pointing out that personal assumptions and interpretive judgements underpin most, if not all, decisions in the process of constructing an 'objective' and 'scientific' instrument.

To my dismay, none of the published studies I knew of employing a survey, whether in this country or abroad, offered details of the process or rationale for constructing a questionnaire.

"We lack strong theories about attitudinal constructs in people's minds, theories that might help us to understand what happens when we use language to trigger or activate such constructs in order to reach and measure them. Without such theories, all our tradecraft leaves us floundering, so that the problem of attitudinal validity remains one of the most difficult in social research and one to which an adequate solution is not yet in sight."

(Oppenheim, 1992: 149)

Having embarked on this research assuming objective attitude measurement to be possible, I eventually discarded the belief that attitudes can be meaningfully measured, let alone by somebody who has no direct access to them. Instead, I turned my efforts to illuminating staff perspectives on inclusion.

Conversation with Sophia: riverside walk **(Rationale for survey)**

"Are you hungry?" Sophia asks, making me instantly aware of my empty stomach.

"Yeah, starving actually; haven't eaten since breakfast" I reply, surprised at not having felt the slightest discomfort earlier.

We are taking a leisurely stroll, casually talking about the role of surveys in social science research.

"I am starving too; shall we go and find something to eat?" she asks.

I notice she has chosen to use exactly the same word as me and wonder if we are both experiencing exactly the same sensation; or whether there is a way of knowing, for that matter.

"Do you think it is possible to compare how hungry two people feel?" I voice my thoughts.

"What a funny idea! We could never meaningfully quantify hunger, let alone in a way that sustains comparison. Besides, the moment you ask someone how hungry they feel, you would be making them conscious of a sensation they may not have been aware of, instantly changing their perception of hunger."

"And what would be the difference between one's hunger and one's perception of hunger?"

She remains silent and all I hear in response to my question is the sound of our footsteps and the flow of the river beside us.

"Of course you could, if you wanted to, create a scale for measuring hunger. You could identify points on a scale and ask people to state if they were, for example, 'not very hungry', 'somewhat hungry', 'very hungry' or 'starving'. You could then score responses and compare scores. There are plenty of social science textbooks telling you how to do this."

"Yes, but would my results reflect more their experience or my idea of its representation? Couldn't two people feel equally hungry but describe themselves as 'very hungry' and 'starving' respectively? How do we know that this evens itself out? Or do we assume that it does because it suits us and others have assumed it before?"

"I think you'd end up with numbers which may or may not be replicated by a 'hungerometer', should one ever exist."

"That's frustrating... I thought Likert scales were standard practice in social science research."

"They are; then again, so were lunar methods in determining longitude at sea, before Harrison's chronometer flew in the face of decades of scientific convention[1]. Personally I think you could defend the use of Likert scales on the grounds of convention alone,

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[1] Dava Sobel tells a fascinating story of determination and discovery behind the concept of longigude. Seamen had for years been trying in vain to determine their precise geographical position at sea by means of laborious calculations (they sought to measure distances between celestial objects and compare these to figures in complicated charts in order to gleam their location). In the eighteenth century one man almost single-handedly advocated and developed an alternative method based on accurate time-keepers (the method of determining longitude today). The scientific community of his time is reported to have refuted the validity and reliability of his method and even to have jeopardised his work, until an increased demand for time-keepers by navigators themselves established this method (Sobel, 1998).

but if you were to claim to have captured and quantified the hunger of others you might find yourself on slippery ground. Why are we having this conversation anyway?"

"Only because it seems very relevant to what we were discussing earlier, about the use of questionnaires in accessing people's view- What's the matter?" I suddenly realise Sophia has come to an abrupt halt. I walk back the couple of paces to reach her and ask again "What is the matter?"

"Can we sit down for a while? I think I need to stop and gather my thoughts."

"Yes, sure!" Sophia rests her back against a tree trunk and slides down to sit facing the river. I sit down a little further, cross my legs and quietly hum a madrigal tune as I watch a silver swan swimming among the geese in the distance. I replay in my mind our earlier conversation and wonder if this small interlude about measuring hunger has made Sophia want to re-examine her faith in conventional ways of measuring views or attitudes. I cast a caring look in her direction and catch a glimpse of my friend's squinting eyes and troubled expression. Moving closer to the riverbank I wonder what is going through her mind, whether her own words have carved a sliver of doubt in her previously solid confidence and what, if anything, she might choose to tell me. Which reminds me, once again, of my conviction that one can never know for sure what is, or is not, in someone else's mind. Finding out what mainstream school staff think of working with disabled children is just a point in question. I lean over and dip my hand in the river, letting the cold water rush through

my fingers. It would be nice to be able to capture their thoughts, but it is probably wise to acknowledge that one cannot. I follow my mind examining the reciprocal relationship between 'having' and 'articulating' a view and lose track of time.

"Penny for your thoughts." I look up, startled. Sophia has also dipped her hand in the water, close to mine.

"How long have you been here?" I smile in surprise.

"Only a few minutes. Are you ready to carry on?" We both get up. *"So what were you thinking?"* she asks again.

"Oh, goodness, it's not easy to explain. Which, in a funny sort of way, is precisely what I was thinking. It was something about the tension between a desire for certainty and an inadequacy of available tools."

"And is this about disability, inclusion or your research?"

I pause for a moment. "Well it's about all of these things, actually, although I hadn't realized this when I said it. I was only talking about language as a tool for conveying meaning."

"I think I know what you mean" she replies, *"but don't you think that the more you try to unpick these issues the more you get lost in the ambiguity of words that mean different things to different people? You know, try and articulate your thoughts and you have nothing other than a contentious set of words to support you. It sometimes feels like trying to wade through an*

overgrown field with only vegetation to help you part the vegetation."

"It's funny you should say that! I sometimes think of it like swimming in a sea of words with only words to help keep you buoyant."

"So anyway, tell me more about this survey you are thinking of doing. I think it's great that you are aware of the limitations of subjective research."

So she still considers there to be an alternative… I choose to let that be, for now.

"Well… I've done a bit of reading and a bit of thinking, and last year I interviewed some people… and I'm just left wondering what the bigger picture is. You know, to put it crudely, do staff practise inclusion because they have to or because they want to?"

She laughs. *"And you think you'll get your answers by sending questionnaires out to schools?!"*

I sigh…

"I just don't understand you" she goes on, *"first you say it's impossible to measure views or attitudes because you are not inside the other person's head and then you set out to measure these things?"*

"No, Sophia, I'm *not* setting out to measure them. But just because I think that something cannot be captured and

measured by research doesn't mean that it cannot be researched at all."

"Well what then?"

"OK, let's consider views for a start. Do we choose to imagine them as potentially decomposed when not in use and reconstituted when being considered, possibly shaped by the very process of articulation itself? Or do we choose to reify them and imagine them lying dormant in one's mind until summoned to be expressed? Either way, the minute a researcher inquires about them they appear at the forefront of one's mind and..."

"Do you mean a bit like turning on the light to observe somebody sleeping, instantly waking them up?"

"That's *exactly* what I mean! And not only that, but before a view is expressed, especially to a researcher, it may well be very swiftly formulated, reformulated or put through social desirability or other filters." If Neil Mercer was here, I cannot help thinking, he would probably have said that "Our attitudes and opinions on issues are not like pre-recorded tapes that we run each time a topic is raised. If someone raises a topic, we recast our ideas as a form of attack, or support, for their point of view. In this way, our knowledge, opinions and attitudes are shaped by our engagement in dialogue" (Mercer, 2000: 78). Oblivious to my thoughts, Sophia responds to my previous statement:

"So what can you do about it?"

"Nothing, in one sense; a researcher has absolutely no control over this process, other than the potential to encourage sincere responses. On the other hand, there *is* a lot you can do about it, in terms of adjusting your expectations. Social scientists have been striving for precise, reliable, objective findings; anything less has not been considered valid knowledge."

"And you are going to tell me that imprecise, unreliable, subjective findings are also valid?"

"Well let's turn that on its head. If we cannot get a reliable, precise and objective measure of people's views, does that mean that we stop looking? If we cannot get a reliable, precise and objective snapshot of a bigger picture, do we examine a close-up view in isolation? What use would in-depth studies be without some knowledge of the context? What is the point of detailed knowledge of a leaf if you have no concept of the plant?"

"And, I suppose, you'd want to know about the garden, or the forest, in order to better understand the plant."

"Precisely! I think in order to understand anything, you need to study detail as much as you need to study breadth. So I want to try and understand more about the breadth of perspectives on inclusion before exploring people's views in detail."

"So you'll aim for an inaccurate measure of people's views" she mocks.

"No! Please listen: I'm not trying to *measure* anything. I am trying to *access* people's thoughts and views, in the full

knowledge that the process of investigation may interfere with what (if anything) was there in the first place. You may see this as imprecise, for arguably it is not an accurate reflection of people's views; that might be as unattainable as drawing a picture of one's hunger. You may want to see it as unreliable because if somebody else asked the questions on a different day they may well get different responses[2]. And you may want to call it subjective as there will be a lot of interpretation involved; as, indeed, with *any* piece of research. But at the end of the day I still consider it the best thing available and therefore worth pursuing."

"So are you saying that each researcher needs to have two types of lenses, one for close-up and another for panoramic view?"

"Kind of. It would depend on the research question. In fact..." I smile at the view she has just helped me develop "I think if a lens is one's frame of mind then you can only have one. I would personally choose a lens that will help me get a clear close-up picture, but ensure I also use it to look at the panoramic view."

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[2] You, the reader, might choose to denounce the 'poor reliability' of a study which explores responses so openly claimed to depend upon the questions that evoked them. I would argue, however, that to ask "what sort of school do you think physically disabled children should go to?" may evoke a different response to "what sort of school do you think children with physical impairments who are able academically, should go to?". Perhaps one question allows for more assumptions than the other. Far from wishing to see my findings criticized as unreliable, I make this point to claim enhanced validity through the process of exposing and exploring assumptions. Convention addressed, let us now return to my conversation with Sophia.

"That would give you a nicely blurred picture!"

"Exactly! Because I would not claim that the macroscopic view can ever be clear and precise. But I still think of it as a snapshot worth having. A fuzzy representation of others' perspectives *must* be better than none at all."

"So are you saying that even though you consider a postal questionnaire survey an inadequate tool for accessing people's views, rather than abandoning it you will just lower your expectations and your knowledge-claims?"

"Yes! It's only going to be a descriptive survey; just a snapshot of the 'here and now', albeit blurry, to provide the context for the close up view."

"Ah well, good luck with it. Let's go and get something to eat; are you hungry?"

"However, while detailed individual narratives, gathered during in-depth interviews, are an important source of data, we sometimes need to survey narratives of large populations if, perhaps, less deeply. The question is not which is the correct research approach, but, rather, what are the researchers' assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon under inquiry and what questions are being asked. Those who adhere to the assumptions of the narrative-constructivist research approach are thus in need of a method to survey the narratives of large populations."

(Shkedi, 2004: 89)

The main method of gathering data in narrative survey, is the interview. (...) This study is based on observations and in-depth interviews conducted with 52 teachers. (...) Each teacher was interviewed twice for two to three hours.

(ibid: 97)

However, in using the positivistic-quantitative approach for collecting data and its analysis, the picture that we would have arrived at, compared to the study that we conducted above using narrative-constructivist methods, would have had less depth and would not have uncovered many of the "secret stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) that form part of the informants' world. These types of data can only be revealed through in-depth oral qualitative interviews, using qualitative-based methods for analysis and narrative cross-case representation.

(ibid: 108-9)

I beg to differ. While I applaud the expression of need for "a method to survey the narratives of large populations", I believe a postal questionnaire that invites, indeed yields, personal stories, to be a valid tool for narrative surveys.

Constructing the questionnaire

Copies of both pilot and main study questionnaire can be found in Appendix C. Over the next few pages I describe and review the process of constructing the questionnaire.

In constructing the questionnaire, my first decision was to limit this to one side of A4, out of respect for people's time and a hope to maximise returns. I also chose to have as many open questions as possible, so as not to constrain responses.

With hindsight, both these were wise decisions which have enabled me to enjoy the benefits of a qualitative questionnaire. Far from an oxymoron, as data collected resembles data from structured interviews, I believe such a label aptly describes a quantitative tool in qualitative hands.

After careful consideration of current terminology I settled for "disabled children", the phrase currently favoured by the disabled community. This avoids yesteryear's inheritance "children with special needs", reminiscent of the medical model of disability, as well as its cumbersome alternative "children said to have special needs". In referring to "disabled children", the term "disabled" is not an adjective describing an attribute of some children but rather a verb, the phrase taken to mean 'children who have been disabled by their context and/or circumstances'. In this sense disability is what some children experience, not what they 'have'. Please see pages 5-7 and 36 for further scrutiny of terminology. This choice of terminology was clearly explained in a letter to all participants and repeated at the top of the questionnaire. To guard against misinterpretation of "disabled children" as those with physical impairments, I further clarified: "some people prefer the term 'children with special educational needs'".

The word 'inclusion' was deliberately absent from both the questionnaire and the accompanying letter, for two reasons: firstly because its current use spans aspects of diversity wider than disability, referring for example to pupils' cultural or ethnic background; and secondly because the word 'inclusion' was deemed too emotive as a political issue and I feared participants may have perceived a pressure to express support for inclusion in principle.

"A 'loaded' word or phrase is one which is emotionally coloured and suggests an automatic feeling of approval or disapproval (...) Respondents are reacting not so much to the issue posed by the question as to the loaded phrase itself."
(Oppenheim, 1992: 137)

The main study questionnaire, entitled 'mainstream primary staff views', had two short introductory paragraphs:
"Please take a few moments to consider your stance on the issue of schooling for disabled children (i.e. whether you think that in principle most disabled children should attend special or mainstream schools).
Please remember that in this project the term 'disabled children' refers to any child whose educational provision calls for arrangements over and above those ordinarily made in mainstream schools for the majority of children; some people prefer the term 'children with special educational needs'."

Bram Oppenheim alerts researchers to particular patterns of responses, including "the tendency to reply to attitude-scale items in a particular way, almost irrespective of content. (…) [For example] 'social desirability'; this is the tendency to reply 'agree' to items that the respondents believe reflect socially desirable attitudes."

(Oppenheim (1992: 181)

The first item invited participants to position themselves in favour of segregated or inclusive education in principle. I provided a range of statements, believing this to be less prone to desirability bias than an invitation to agree or disagree with a specific statement. Keen to explore both content and intensity of views, while avoiding a dubious dichotomy between 'agree' and 'strongly agree', I opted to indicate intensity by adding "and I go out of my way to support this" to each position statement. Having initially thought I should not provide a 'fence' for participants to sit on, I eventually decided to include a neutral option, so as not to force anyone into adopting a position, but deliberately phrased this in a way that rendered it all but irrational: "I think most disabled children can benefit equally from either special or mainstream schooling." Wishing to guard against social desirability and a reported tendency to select options at the beginning of a list, I placed the statements in favour of special schools first.

"[D]o we really want to obtain 'forced' responses which are virtually meaningless? Indeed, sometimes 'don't know' responses can be very important."

(Oppenheim, 1992: 128-9)

In its final form, item one invited respondents to indicate which of five statements was closest to their views, ranging from "I think special schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this", to "I think mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this."

With hindsight, it may have been unrealistic to expect that one's views on such a complex issue can unproblematically be summed up in one statement. It may also have been too ambitious to ask busy practitioners, particularly some who may not ordinarily engage with considering such issues in principle, to express a view in principle divorced from their perceptions of inclusion in practice. If anything, the statements offered may have inadvertently prompted respondents to consider mainstream or special schooling as they are currently constructed, thus further complicating any distinction between principle and experience.

"All of this further confirms a theme that keeps reappearing through the pages of this book, that of growth within schools through what is essentially a social process of helping those involved to learn *how* to learn from difference in order to develop new possiblities for action. It seems to me that it is in this way that the cultural change that is needed within an organization in order to create more inclusive ways of working can be achieved."

(Ainscow, 1999: 176)

Item two attempted to access participants' rationale for their choice of statement about inclusion in principle. Acknowledging that choice of school constitutes a complex decision, this item invited participants to list up to three advantages of special and mainstream schooling for disabled children. This was deliberately phrased as an open question, in spite of the analytic difficulties engendered, to avoid any possibility of influencing responses. Given that my prime interest was in shedding light on participants' own perspectives, providing a list of what they might be thinking seemed quite inappropriate, if not counter-productive.

In retrospect I consider this to have been a sound decision which generated valuable insights into positions which may not have been expressed under 'other' following a list of conventionally expressed views. For example, given a carte blanche, a number of respondents mentioned decreased pressure on mainstream schools as one of the main advantages of special schools; I believe this may not have been voiced if a list was provided, comprising of issues such as specialist resources and facilities, staff training and expertise, adult : child ratio and tailor-made curriculum.

Having sought an overall view and rationale behind it, the next item invited information on level of engagement with these issues. This was generated by an interest in establishing the extent to which practitioners examine such issues in principle and an attempt to distinguish between respondents who approached the questionnaire having given these issues some prior thought and those who had not. This question was deliberately presented in a way to diminish, if not avoid, social desirability bias (Oppenheim, 1992: 138-140), prefaced as it was by a statement legitimising lack of prior consideration: "Primary school staff are often very busy, with a variety of issues competing for their attention. How often do you think about the issues in the above questions?" As this called for people to estimate frequency of thinking, not adopt a position as was the case in question one, response options did not include a 'neutral' point. The pilot questionnaire offered a scale of 1 to 10, only quantifying 1 as 'never' and 10 as 'every day'; attempting to analyse responses highlighted this scale as arbitrary and impractical. In the questionnaire of the main study the introduction was kept the same but the question rephrased to: "How often do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of including disabled children in mainstream schools?" The scale was reduced to a four-point scale of: "rarely or never", "occasionally", "often" and "every day".

"Open questions, on the other hand, enable respondents to write a free response in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid the limitations of pre-set categories of response. On the other hand the responses are difficult to code and to classify. The issue for researchers is one of 'fitness for purpose'."

(Cohen et al., 2000: 248)

With hindsight, these refinements still failed to unequivocally distinguish between examining issues in principle (for example contemplating the benefits of including a disabled child) and merely addressing them in relation to current practice (for example commenting on practical difficulties of including a disabled child). I believe this was more adequately addressed in the qualitative phase of the project.

Item four enquired after prior encounters with disability in respondents' personal or professional life. This was motivated by an interest to explore the relationship between personal experiences and views put forward and was deliberately phrased as an open question so as not to constrain responses. In the pilot questionnaire this was phrased as: "Please mention any encounters with disability that have felt significant for you. These may be work-related or may include examples such as a friend or relative with a disability, a biography or other book, a news item, a documentary or any other influential experience." Analysing the pilot survey highlighted lack of information on the impact of such experiences, so this item was rephrased to: "Please mention any encounters with disability that have felt significant for you and briefly state how each has affected you. (These may be work-related or you may cite a friend or relative with a disability, a biography or other book, news item, documentary or any other influential experience; please feel free to continue overleaf.)" This item generated a wealth of information, often spanning well beyond the space allocated.

Finally, item five sought basic demographic information on respondents. The pilot questionnaire attempted to access precise information on participants' role and experience, but this involved more complex instructions and generated a number of incomplete responses: for example one respondent indicated having ten years of experience as a Headteacher but gave no indication of years of experience as a Class teacher or Deputy Headteacher. The study questionnaire was amended, as a result, to seek information on participants' gender, years of experience in primary schools and current role. This involved a slight compromise on data gathered (for example, the questionnaire could no longer detect if a Learning Support Assistant had previously worked as a teacher) but such lack of sensitivity to rare exceptions seemed more than compensated by more accurate information through simpler questioning. Responses to this question could render certain individuals identifiable (for example the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and SENCo in any school); attempting to address potential angst, I included further reassurance of anonymity by adding: "Please remember that all responses, including names of schools, will be reported anonymously".

I gave considerable thought to the ordering of questions. Oppenheim (1992: 109) advocates having study-related questions first and personal information last as a matter of courtesy to respondents; Cohen et al (2000: 257) recommend personal information questions first, for ease of responding. I decided to ask for personal information last, largely due to the sensitive nature of views sought.

"Another way of maintaining the respondents' co-operation is by making the questionnaire and the answering process more *attractive*. In self-completion and mail questionnaires the layout, printing, choice of paper, spacing, answering directions and so forth should all be carefully considered, and piloted wherever possible."

(Oppenheim, 1992: 122, emphasis original)

At the end of the page the questionnaire invited respondents to make further comments overleaf, thanked them for their contribution and reminded them how and when to return their completed questionnaire. A school identification number was printed at the bottom of the page. The two schools of the pilot phase carried a random six-digit number; for the main survey I considered this inappropriate, not least because the schools' anonymity would be further protected if I could avoid keeping a list matching school names to numbers, albeit under lock and key. I decided against using each school's unique DfES number, reasoning that staff may readily recognise this and possibly feel more exposed. I settled for devising an eight-digit code made up of letters and numbers, which only I know how to decipher. The code gives me information of whether a school is an Infant, Junior or Primary School, where it appears in my list of schools and how many questionnaires I posted.

Finally, I considered questionnaire appearance and layout. Having grouped eight questions into five items I drew a box around each item, seeking to make the questionnaire appear more manageable, if not appealing. I reviewed instructions to respondents for clarity and conciseness and presented these in italics to distinguish from other text. Key words appeared in bold, for additional emphasis.

Conducting the survey

Over the next few pages I describe the process of conducting first the pilot and then the main survey.

I chose to pilot the survey in two schools of a neighbouring LEA, where I had links from previous employment. As a matter of courtesy to potential participants I contacted the education department first, seeking permission to approach the schools. In the event it took three long weeks to establish whom, in the midst of the department's changing management structure, I should be speaking to and to secure permission in principle to proceed; it took a further month (including the Easter break) to confirm which two schools would take part in the pilot survey. Having been ready to proceed in early March, survey packs were eventually sent to pilot schools at the end of April with a return deadline of mid May. I undertook an analysis of the pilot survey and sent an individualised report to both participating schools; anonymised copies of these are presented in Appendix C3.

As the processes for distribution and initial analysis remained largely unchanged for the main study survey, I shall describe these together to avoid repetition.

While still at the planning stage of the project I had met with the study LEA's Inclusion Manager, discussed the aims of this study and established her strong interest and support for this research.

Following the half-term break in June 2004 I launched the main study survey. I wrote to all Headteachers, followed this up with a telephone call to confirm participation, then sent survey packs to all schools that had agreed to participate.

The initial letter to all Headteachers can be found in Appendix C4. This highlighted LEA support and potential benefits of schools' contribution, described the study and participation requirement and offered my contact details alongside advance notice of my follow-up telephone call. The letter was carefully worded, aiming to be personal and succinct. Such a personalised approach necessitated each of 118 letters to be individually printed and signed, on University headed paper. I reasoned that both time and expense were fully justified in the name of research ethics (respect for participants) and in the hope that this, in turn, may generate greater participation in the survey.

With hindsight, I doubt whether many Headteachers found the time to read this letter, let alone notice the personal touch. A Headteacher whom I know socially told me she normally bins such letters straight away and that her school would not have participated had she not known me. With the insight into the busy life of a Headteacher gleamed from the qualitative phase of this project, I no longer think the additional effort could have any impact on participation. That said, I would still advocate the personal approach in the name of research ethics.

I soon embarked on a marathon of telephone calls to negotiate participation from schools and find out how many questionnaires to post to each one. I had initially aimed to speak with each of the 118 Headteachers personally, but quickly realized I had seriously underestimated both the time and effort needed for this. Headteachers were either out of school (off sick, on a course, at Headteachers' conference, on school camp or returning the minibus from camp) or in assembly, on lunch or playtime duty, teaching or observing in class, at choir rehearsal, at leavers' service, writing a report, in a meeting, on the 'phone, with prospective parents, or simply "busy". It felt as though I was repeatedly seen by school secretaries as an unwelcome intruder from whom they should protect their Head, often having this all but spelt out for me. In a number of schools I heard that the Head was unavailable to speak to me but it would not be worth my time to ring back. On what grounds were these powerful gatekeepers making such fielding decisions? The possibility that their perception of priorities may differ from that of their Headteacher's seems troubling. I swiftly developed negotiation tactics attempting to convey the relevance of my research for schools: I modified my opening statement from mentioning 'research', often sufficient to dispel attention, to 'research on inclusion' and later 'researching staff views on inclusion', justifying use of the loaded term in the pursuit of attentiveness. In some schools I negotiated sending survey packs to be distributed or disposed of at the Headteacher's discretion, in the absence of an opportunity to discuss this in advance. In a small number of schools considering participation was postponed to the autumn term. I vented some of my frustration by writing 'Checkmate on access' which can be found in Appendix C5.

At the time I was intrigued by a consistent pattern of Headteachers, other senior staff or admin staff easily recalling numbers of teachers but hesitating, often guessing, numbers of learning support assistants in a school. Nowadays I find this understandable, if not expected, as LSAs seem to constitute a far more transient population than teaching staff.

Survey packs included a letter, questionnaire and small reply envelope for each member of staff, a covering letter for the Headteacher and a large envelope for all individual responses to be returned in.

In order to protect participants' anonymity and harbour uninhibited expression, particularly as I anticipated a sense of vulnerability perceived by respondents wishing to express reservations to inclusion, I provided a small envelope for each participant to seal their questionnaire individually. These envelopes were labelled

Questionnaire Response
Mainstream Primary Staff Views

I also provided each school with a large envelope, for all responses to be returned to me. For the pilot project I calculated the postage for all questionnaires being returned and affixed that on the reply envelope. For the study survey I opted for the more cost-effective way of setting up a Freepost address, therefore only paying for postage actually used. This carried the additional advantage of having responses delivered to my home address, without compromising a professional appearance.

The opportunity to seal individual responses seems to have been greatly valued by participants. With only one exception of a questionnaire arriving without an envelope, all others arrived in sealed envelopes, none merely folded, while some were further secured by sellotape or, on one occasion, by drawing parallel lines across the seal. This could be an absent-minded action at the end of a long day or may be an indication that some respondents deliberately guarded against their responses being viewed by others. I feel inclined to think the latter.

Continuing to strive for personal contact, I included one letter for each member of staff; the letter introduced the project and clarified the term 'disabled children', stressed the importance of each individual voice, highlighted the LEA's interest in the project and reassured participants of confidentiality and anonymity before describing the procedure for returning completed questionnaires; a copy of this letter can be found in Appendix C6. Each letter carried an electronic signature and was individually printed on Graduate School of Education headed paper. Once again, I justified the time and expense in the name of demonstrating respect for participants. For the same reason, I ensured survey packs arrived in schools ready for distribution to individual members of staff: for each participant a questionnaire and letter were held together by the fold of a reply envelope. A short letter to the Head, or the Deputy or SENCo in the few instances that my call had been passed on to them, was placed at the top of the pack. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix C7 and an amended version, for schools where I had not secured agreement in advance, in Appendix C8.

At the end of a long week I had sent 622 questionnaires to 31 schools that had agreed to participate and 918 questionnaires to 43 schools whose contribution had yet to be decided. 30 schools felt unable to participate and 11 agreed to be contacted again in the autumn; 8 of those took part, receiving a total of 183 questionnaires. I failed to reach a conclusion in 3 schools. The total number of questionnaires was 1,723 sent out to 82 schools. I posted all survey packs by first-class post on the day this was negotiated, hoping to convey a sense of significance.

With hindsight, the end of the school year was a particularly unsuitable time to undertake this survey. Far from winding down, mainstream school staff are heavily overloaded with writing reports, organizing concerts, sports days and other annual events, as well as rounding off one year and preparing for the next. I have also grown critical of my former resolve to speak to every Headteacher. This had originated from my limited, at the time, understanding of management structure in contemporary mainstream schools and the strong advice from the pilot LEA to seek the Headteacher's consent, not that of the Deputy or SENCo. From a log that totals over 400 telephone calls throughout the entire survey, less than 40 involved me speaking to a Headteacher. At the time I had found this frustrating but with my current understanding of mainstream school culture, mostly stemming from the qualitative phase of this project and my experience as a school governor, I find my determined pursuit of Headteachers unnecessary, if not shameful. In the absence of an opportunity to speak to the Head, it now seems entirely appropriate, if not preferable, to ask to speak to someone else in a position to decide on the school's participation, for example the Deputy, Assistant Head or SENCo. I now believe I followed the pilot LEA's advice too rigidly, rather than applying it 'in the first instance' as it must have been intended.

I shall continue telling this story without the use of text boxes, as the amount of detailed information would necessitate increasingly larger boxes of more dense text. I believe that a linear narrative form of double-spaced writing is better suited to the text from this point forward.

A total of 330 questionnaires were returned from 47 schools. This represents 39.8% of all 118 schools and 57.3% of 82 schools that received survey packs[1]. Out of 805 questionnaires posted to 39 schools that agreed to participate, 239 (29.7%) were returned from 33 (84.6%) schools; out of 918 questionnaires posted to 43 schools without a firm agreement to participate, 91 (9.9%) were returned from 14 (32.6%) schools. The rather unorthodox means of establishing participation in some schools determines that reporting on the number of schools intending to participate is highly problematic, if not impossible. I received an average of 7 questionnaires from each of the 47 schools that took part in the survey, ranging from 1 to 13 respondents from any one school; this represents 5-65% of staff in each school, with a mean of 34.2% per school. Any attempt to interpret response rates from these figures seems futile, as the responsibility for distributing survey packs to individual staff members remained with the school; the possibility that questionnaires were briefly mentioned in a staff meeting and subsequently left in a pile in the staffroom seems just as likely as the possibility that they were completely ignored or individually delivered to each member of staff.

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[1] Having contemplated what level of accuracy seems appropriate for these figures, I believe percentages to one decimal point to be precise enough (any more would offer superfluous detail and any less would appear too crude). I hasten to add that, as ever, precision in numbers of respondents has no bearing whatsoever on precision of interpretation of these figures, or on the relationship between people's lived experience and a numerical representation of it. In other words, offering a precise answer to the 'how many?' question does not render answering the 'so what?' question any less problematic.

Processing survey responses

At first glance of responses received, level of engagement seems striking: strength of feeling both pro and against inclusion was conveyed not only through phraseology but through emphasizing devices such as capitalisation and underlining. 21.5% of participants included additional comments on the reverse, spanning from a few lines to three handwritten pages. One participant, whose sister apparently became severely disabled as an adult, included a poem with her questionnaire; I have included this in Appendix C11. She was one of six participants, from four schools, who posted their questionnaires within the last two weeks of the summer term, having missed the deadline for the school envelope being returned. It is tempting to interpret such initiatives as strong willingness to participate in the context of a particularly busy time of year.

When designing the questionnaire I had anticipated letting categories emerge from the data and using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to process responses and report on descriptive statistics. In processing responses from the pilot survey the closed questions were relatively simple to code, as I allocated a numerical value to each response category. This rendered question three all but impossible to interpret, hence the main survey was amended by reducing response categories from ten to four. Questions five and six of the pilot were coded as a raw score for total years of experience (acknowledging that it would be

too complicated to separately code years of previous experience in a different role) and a numerical value allocated for each response category for current role in school as well as for each possible combination (for example 'Headteacher and SENCo' or 'Class teacher and Deputy Headteacher'). Question five of the main study questionnaire was coded similarly.

My process for coding the open questions was somewhat more elaborate. Determined to let coding categories emerge from the data, in the first instance I summarised and entered all responses in a Microsoft Word document as a list, then used colour coding to group similar responses together and from there identified final coding categories. I then allocated a numerical value to each category, to enable data to be entered in SPSS.

From the pilot survey, categories for advantages of special schooling (question 2a) had emerged as: 'specialist staff', 'staff-to-pupil ratio', 'physical resources', 'curriculum', 'social benefits' and 'reducing pressure from mainstream'. The last category had taken me by surprise but seemed to clearly constitute part of some participants' thinking, evident from responses such as: "less disruptive for other pupils" or avoiding a "burden on both the teacher and the whole class". Categories for advantages of mainstream schooling (question 2b) had emerged from the pilot survey as: 'advantages in principle' (for example "equality of opportunity" or "true

reflection of society"), 'advantages for disabled children' and 'advantages for non-disabled children'. With regard to coding personal encounters with disability (question 4) four categories had emerged: work-related experiences that were positive, negative or not clearly evaluated and non work-related experiences.

An initial look through main survey questionnaires indicated that coding categories from the pilot survey would be a good starting point. I began with allocating each response to one of the existing categories, considering these as temporary while coding was still in progress and regularly reviewing and refining categories as the volume of processed data increased. The four categories for question 4 (significant encounters with disability) were retained and a further two were added: 'positive experience of special schooling' and 'other' (which included issues such as positive experience of split placements). All responses to this question were allocated to one of these categories, given the corresponding numerical value and entered into SPSS. In addition, I typed all responses to question 4 and all additional comments into a Microsoft Word document, in preparation for undertaking qualitative analysis when appropriate software became easily accessible. (The Graduate School of Education was, at the time, considering purchasing a site license for a qualitative analysis software package.) The volume of responses was such that this document is close to 14,000 words long.

Confirming coding categories for question 2 (advantages of special and mainstream schooling) proved particularly challenging as respondents engaged with this at varying level of detail, which seemed to call for either oversimplification of responses or overlap of categories. I settled for the latter, considering this the lesser of two evils, and finalised coding categories for question 2a (advantages of special schooling) as: 'adult-to-child ratio'; 'trained staff'; 'physical resources'; 'funding (overall)'; 'modified curriculum/no exams'; 'removing pressure from mainstream'; 'complementing mainstream provision'; 'child not feeling isolated'; 'tailor-made environment'; and 'other' (which included considerations such as space, increased expectations and support for family). Coding categories for question 2b (advantages of mainstream schooling) were finalised as: 'correct in principle'; 'prepares for future'; 'social interaction with peers'; 'role models for learning and behaviour'; 'other advantages for disabled children' (including curriculum issues, proximity to home, and avoiding stigma); 'advantages for non-disabled peers'; and 'other' (including advantages for parents and staff). 5 respondents listed no advantages for either type of schooling; 20 suggested advantages for mainstream schooling but none for special; and 36 suggested advantages for special schooling but none for mainstream.

Despite coding categories being generated and continuously revised in response to the data, the coding process was far from unproblematic: the rationale behind specific responses was not available to me and I had

knowingly allowed for some overlap of categories. Both these seemed to call for interpretive decisions during the coding process: for example "being accepted in the local community", put forward as an advantage of mainstream schooling, could belong to the wide group of responses which I called 'advantages for disabled children' or to the even wider group of responses labelled 'correct in principle', often cited as a distinct advantage of mainstream schooling. Perhaps more controversially, "promoting tolerance and understanding", frequently put forward as an advantage of mainstream schooling, could have been suggested as being of benefit to disabled children, to their non-disabled peers and/or school staff, or all of these. In such cases I carefully read the participant's responses to all questions, as well as any additional information offered, before attempting an interpretation of such comments. Albeit perhaps an unavoidable aspect of quantitative research, I found such a call for interpretive judgements in the very early stages of the analytic process both surprising and frustrating.

My excitement at being able to access a 'hazy panoramic view' from this volume of data was severely dampened by an excruciating frustration at the reductionism involved: expecting people to convert lived experience to marks on a single sheet of paper feels quite discourteous; worse still, aggregating all responses to one table of numbers seems utterly disrespectful, if not immoral.

For example, two female teaching members of staff working in different schools, each having over 30 years' experience, presented contrasting perspectives in evocative ways. In question 1 (overall view) the first indicated support for mainstream and the second for special schooling; these were coded as 4 and 2 respectively. Their responses to question 4 (significant encounters with disability) were coded as 4 (non work-related) and 2 (negative experience of inclusion) respectively, on account of these responses:

> "[A close relative of mine] is now blind following an unprovoked attack. He was 21 at the time and is now 30. His life changed overnight. He was fortunate to have had superb support from his parents and brothers. My own son (...) is the same age and not a day goes by when I do not compare their two lives. I am now very aware of the difficulties that blind people experience. Cars parked on pavements, overhanging bushes, cyclists on pavements make me furious. The loss of friends who do not want the bother or responsibility of having a blind member of a group. The lack of independence. Loneliness in a sighted world. My [relative] is a remarkable man in that he never complains about his situation, he is very positive and has never shown any bitterness towards those responsible for his condition. He leads a full life helping others to come to terms with a disability, talking to able bodied groups about how they can help people with disabilities, fund raising, sitting on committees who influence legislation etc. I think it is most unlikely that if the same thing had happened to me that I would have had the courage or personality to have coped so well."
>
> **(female headteacher, 35 yrs experience)**

> "Pupils with ASD – 5 individuals over the last 5 years in my Y2 class. Pupils with delayed speech / understanding. All these have adversely affected the teaching of the majority of the pupils. Stress levels have risen. School is not physically adapted to include severely disabled. Meetings and planning becomes burdensome. Equipment is not always suitable e.g. small items put in mouth scissors & DT equipment too dangerous without intense 1:1 support."
>
> (female teacher, 30 yrs experience)

"[A]s we quantified experience, its richness and expression was stripped away."

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: xxvi)

"The researcher learns that people are never only (nor even a close approximation to) any particular set of isolated theoretical notions, categories, or terms. They are people in all their complexity. They are people living storied lives on storied landscapes."

(ibid: 145)

Quantitative phase findings: 'The hazy panoramic view'

Responding to question one, most staff opted not to identify a particular type of school as preferable in principle, as was the case with the pilot survey. 8 staff (2.4%) selected the statement "I think special schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this"; 60 staff (18.2%) selected the statement "I think special schooling is best for most disabled children"; 149 staff (45.2%) selected "I think most disabled children can benefit equally from either special or mainstream schooling"; 73 staff (22.1%) selected "I think mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children"; and 31 staff (9.4%) selected "I think

mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this". 9 staff (2.7%) did not respond to this question. The distribution of stated views looks like this:

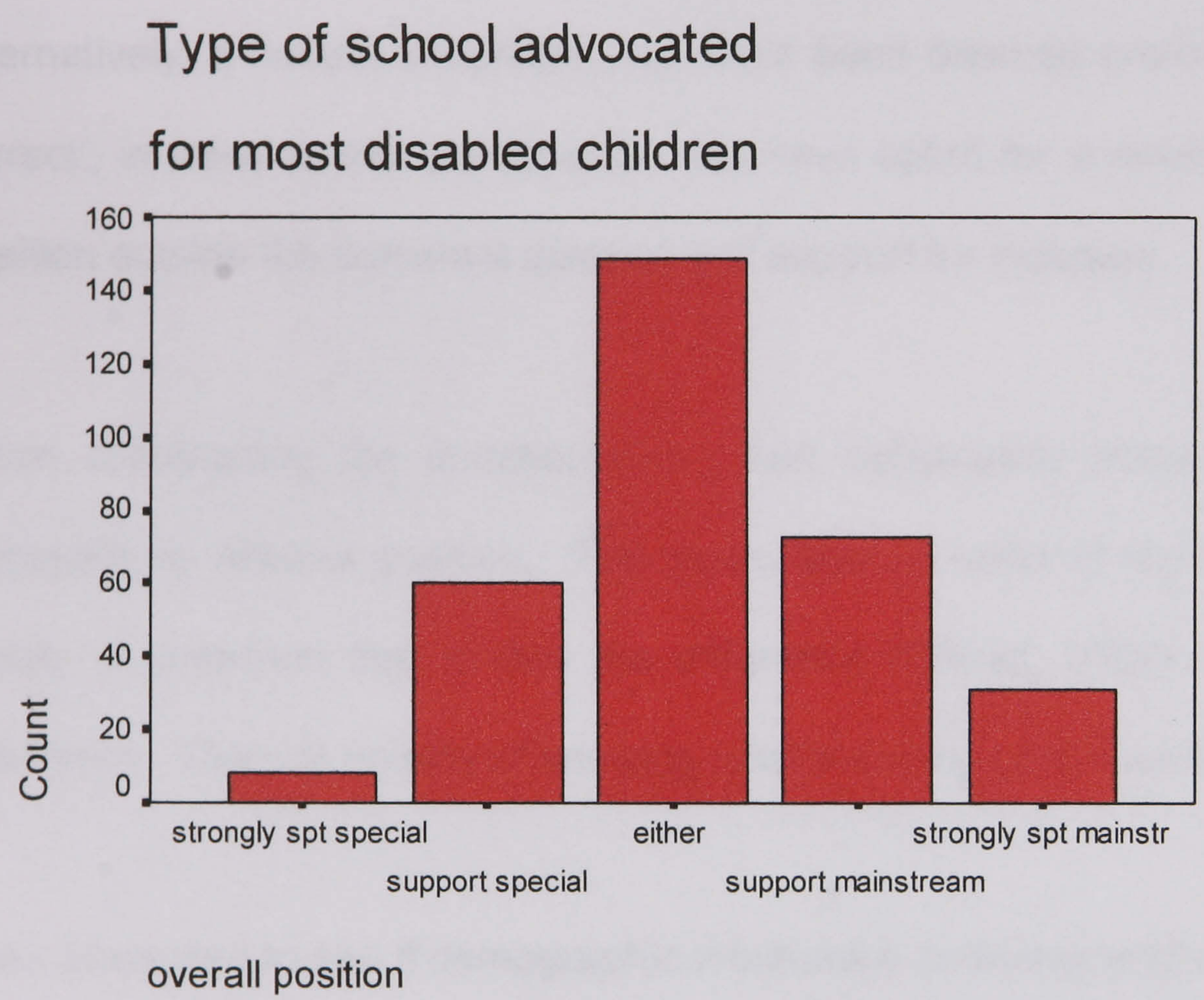

Figure 1: Type of school advocated for most disabled children

Such an overwhelming preference for a middle-of-the-road statement may indicate indifference, indecisiveness, or a reluctance / inability to sum up a complex issue in one statement; situated in a belief, for example, that such blanket statements have no place in a quandary shaped by individual contexts. Alternatively, a neutral statement may have been deemed preferable to one which does not seem 'politically correct'; in other words, participants may have opted for a neutral statement as an alternative to adopting a position outside the dominant discourse of support for inclusion.

When constructing the questionnaire I had deliberately phrased the middle option so that it seemed to represent no rational position. Two years later, a national report proposed that it is not the setting but the quality of provision that makes the difference (Ofsted, 2006), prompting me to find new meaning in this statement. There is no way of knowing what meaning participants had ascribed to it.

I was interested to see if demographic information collected might appear to have any bearing on responses to this question. Gender and years of experience did not seem to affect this pattern but role within the school did. Preferences of class teachers and learning support staff reflect the above pattern, whereas Headteachers and SENCOs seem stronger advocates of mainstream schooling.

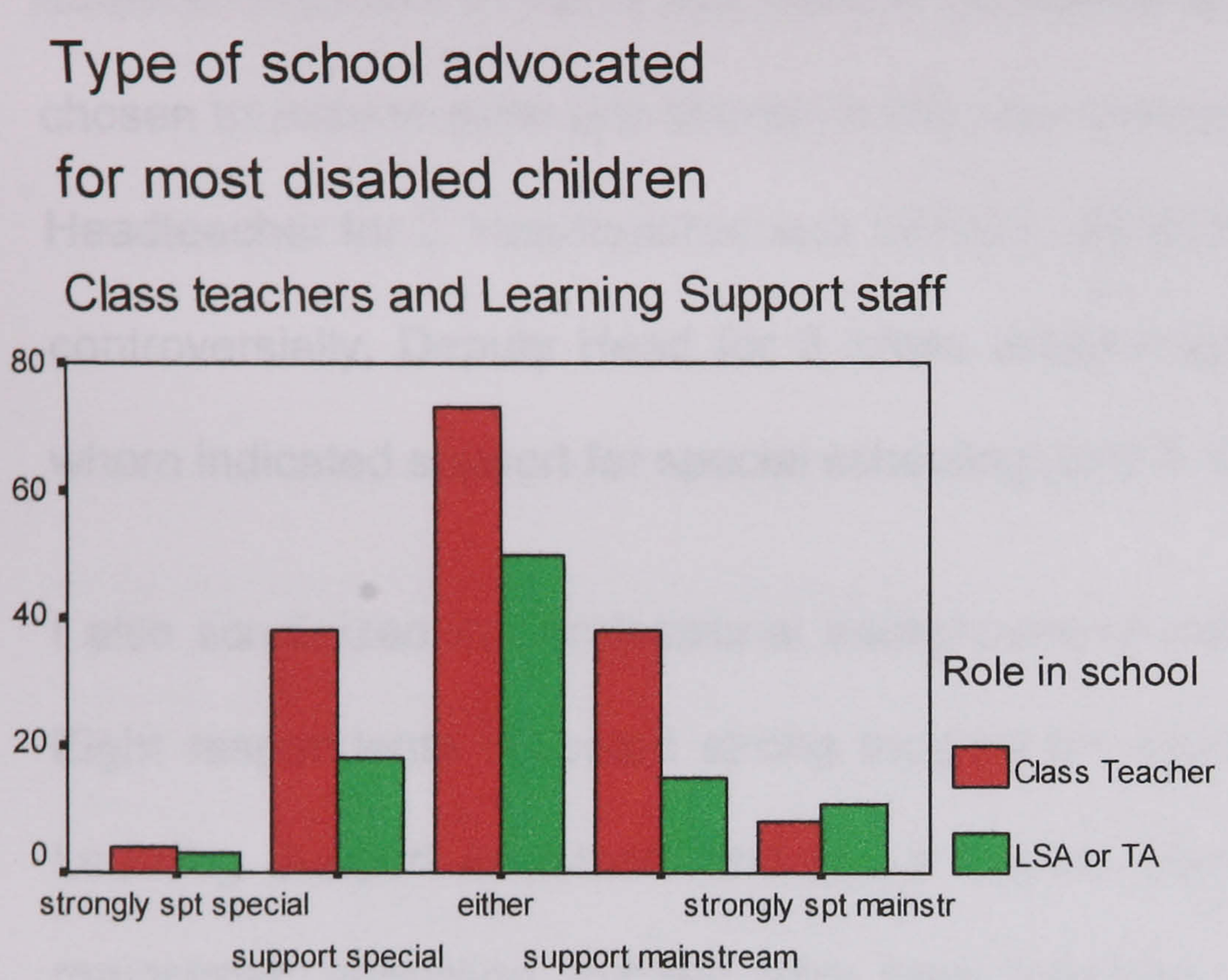

Figure 2: Type of school advocated by Class teachers and Learning Support staff

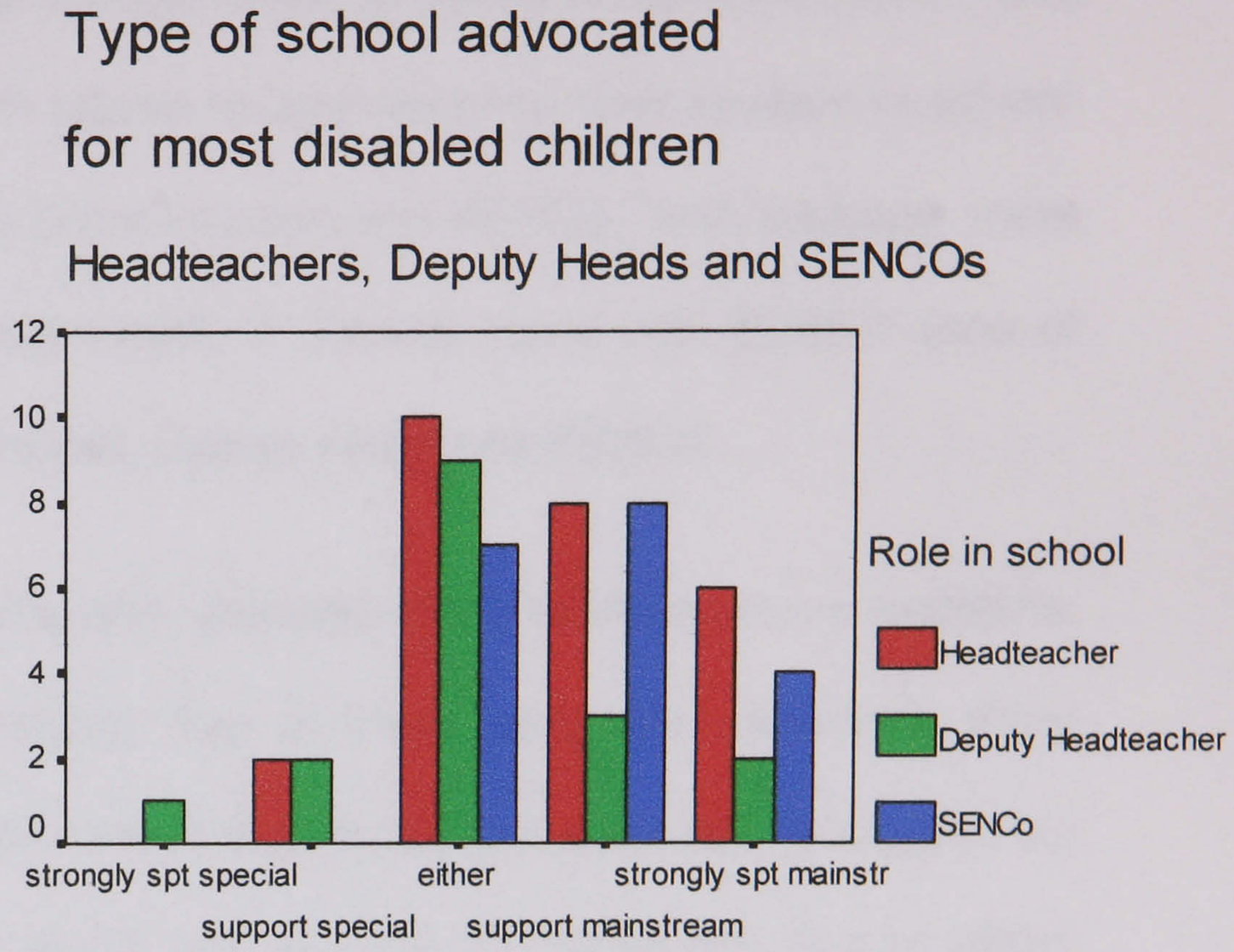

Figure 3: Type of school advocated by Headteachers, Deputy Heads and SENCOs

Such a shifting pattern may be a demonstration of different philosophical standpoints, of stronger focus on strategic issues or of a tactical choice within a context which renders some practitioners identifiable.

It seems important to clarify that there is considerable overlap in these roles; for clarity of representation I have chosen to include each practitioner in the role category which seems to best describe their position in school: Headteacher for 2 'Headteacher and SENCo'; SENCo for 10 'Class teacher and SENCo'; and, perhaps more controversially, Deputy Head for 3 'class teacher and Deputy Head', 2 'Deputy Head and SENCo' (one of whom indicated support for special schooling) and 1 'class teacher, Deputy Head and SENCo'.

I also scrutinized the professional background of respondents who selected either of the extreme positions. Eight respondents indicated strong support for special schooling: four of these were class teachers, three Learning Support Assistants and one a Deputy Head. Thirty-one respondents indicated strong support for mainstream schooling: thirteen were class teachers, one of whom was also Deputy Head and four of whom also SENCo; eleven were Learning Support Assistants; six were Headteachers, of whom one was also SENCo; and one was a Deputy Head.

I was particularly keen to see what participants put forward as advantages of special and mainstream schooling. Processing responses to question two was not without complications. The questionnaire had invited respondents to identify up to three advantages for each type of schooling but many gave more, particularly for special schooling, prompting me to create additional variables on SPSS for each item, allowing

up to four advantages to be coded for each respondent. I occasionally coded long and detailed responses in more general categories so as not to lose any data, finding this another frustrating constraint of a quantitative analysis package. I considered the alternative of creating multiple variables for each broad category (for example 'funding') with values for all subcategories (for example 'adult : child ratio', 'trained staff' or 'physical resources') but discarded this option as it would eliminate any knowledge of the order in which advantages were put forward, as well as imposing relationships that may not be similarly understood by all (for example 'trained staff' was put forward as an example of additional funding by some and an aspect of tailor-made provision by others.) Considering that the rationale for undertaking this survey was to report on numbers of practitioners expressing particular views, rather than attempting to interpret these views, I feel my coding decisions have been appropriate.

The advantage of special schools most frequently cited was staff training and expertise: 197 respondents referred to this, 89 of whom mentioned this first. For example[2]:

Teachers trained specifically to deal with specific disabilities. (M, T, 26)

[2] In an attempt to convey sufficient relevant information, every quote I present is followed by details of its source with regard to gender, role in school and years of experience (please see page 95 for rationale for collecting this data). For example (M, T, 26) indicates a male teacher with 26 years' experience. Role in school is denoted by: H (Headteacher); D (Deputy); A (Assistant Head, a category which emerged from the data); S (SENCo); T (class teacher); and L (LSA, TA or other description of a non-teaching role). Where information was not available I have entered a '?'.

Specialist staff trained to meet the needs of mental or physical problems - especially medical. (F, D, 15)

Specially trained staff are able to target the specific needs of the pupils. (F, T, 30)

Teachers are trained to teach children whose behaviour could be challenging. (F, L, 6)

Facilities fully adapted to their needs. Staff well-trained and available to fully support their needs e.g. speech therapists, physiotherapists. (F, T, 8)

Disabled children can be supported properly, in small classes by experienced, trained teachers. Not by overstretched undertrained mainstream class teachers. (F, T, 4)

Staff are trained specifically for special needs children. The whole class is working together at the same rate doing the same work. (F, L, 3)

Training/expertise of staff; rarely available in mainstream schools. (F, H, 35)

It depends on the disability. For some, trained teachers for specific disabilities are the best. (F, T, 20)

Teachers who have been trained to provide best educational and social education for specific disabilities is sometimes best. (F, T, 15)

For physical disabilities or emotional difficulties child requires specialist intervention or facilities. (F, T, 16)

Access to teachers, learning assistants who are trained to meet the children's needs. (F, T, 10)

More trained staff, e.g. physiotherapists, nurses etc. (F, L, 10)

Expertise of trained people in all fields: teachers, occupational, physio, and speech therapy; EBD therapists as well as SEN trained teachers on tap. (F, H, 30)

128 respondents specifically mentioned a high adult : child ratio, or smaller classes, 57 of whom cited this as the first advantage of special schooling. For example:

Fewer children per teacher. (F, L, 6)

Better child - teacher ratio. (F, T, 4)

Smaller classes therefore more individual attention. (F, L, 10)

Children can have fewer in classes, or on a one-to-one basis. (F, L, 2)

More individual attention; smaller classes. (F, T, 4)

Time to concentrate on child. (M, T, 2)

A high adult/child ratio is possible at all times. (F, T, 30)

Smaller class sizes and therefore better concentration, less time pressure. (F, L, 3)

Higher adult or child ratio therefore children receive more intense instruction. (F, T, 2)

Physical resources were the next consideration most frequently cited. A total of 127 respondents mentioned this, 49 of whom as the first advantage mentioned. For example:

Suitable facilities i.e. ramps, lifting equipment etc. (F, L, 10)

Facilities and equipment are specialised to certain disabilities. (F, L, 2)

More money to adapt buildings. (F, H, 40)

Resources available and accommodation adapted to suit. (F, L, 10)

Specialised resources. Adequate access and facilities. (F, L, 13)

Specialist resources: toilets, sensory play, equipment etc. (F, D, 15)

Mainstream schools may not have appropriate facilities. (F, L, 8)

Facilities (such as nappy changing areas) are better. (F, L, 6)

Depends on child's individual needs whether the problem is social or physical. Certain children will need more sensory equipment provided in special schools, whereas others benefit from social skills structure and gained in mainstream - depends on child, difficult to generalise. (F, L, 1)

Provision of specialist equipment. Adapted buildings e.g. hydrotherapy pool. (F, D/S/T, 28)

Resources available to improve daily schooling i.e. overlays, for visual difficulties, hearing loops, access not always disabled friendly in old school buildings. (F, T, 4)

A tailor-made environment was mentioned or described by 83 respondents, for 45 of whom this was the first advantage cited. For example:

Specialist support and knowledge, concentration of resources to provide best possible care. (F, S, 6)

Specialist environment. (F, T, 27)

Focus on specific needs of child. (M, T, 1)

Children's needs are met as they are required. (F, T, 3)

It is more adaptable to the child's needs. (F, L, 10)

In some cases children require specialist teachers, carers and/or provision that is best provided in special school. (F, L, 14)

Specialist care with staff who are trained properly, specialist building and facilities. (F, T, 4)

Time and resources to meet individual needs of pupils in special school. (F, T, 20)

Usually the resources and equipment and specialist support are already in place. (F, D, 20)

Special schools already have the resources and environment changes - whereas the government is not prepared to put money into mainstream schools to make them inclusive - they tend to just integrate the children. (F, T, 7)

Small school - well fitted for each disability. (F, T, 34)

A specially adapted curriculum was put forward by 61 staff, 23 of whom mentioned this first. For example:

Able to give (sometimes) a more appropriate curriculum. (F, T, 4)

Small classes; more staff; more suitable tailored curriculum. (F, T, 10)

More appropriate timetable. (F, T, 4)

Access to curriculum in mainstream is too difficult. (F, T, 20)

Greater curriculum flexibility. (F, T, 4)

For children with very specific needs, they may be able to access more and better quality of curriculum; i.e. autistic children using TEACHH. (M, T/S, 4)

Individual curriculum more easily planned and monitored. (F, L, 3)

Pressure from achieving SATs/exams is less. (F, T, 4)

Extra physical resources. Outside pressures of exams removed or diluted. (F, H, 30)

Curriculum can be delivered in a variety of ways. (F, T, 11)

48 staff specifically mentioned that special schools relieve pressure from mainstream and/or complement mainstream provision, 19 of whom put this forward as their first consideration. For example:

From a teacher's point of view it makes my job easier. (F, T, 2)

No disruption in mainstream education. (F, T, 26)

In some cases I think the disruption may not benefit education of other children whose needs all need considering also. (F, T, 3)

Children with challenging behaviours need a lot of support and time, which is sometimes taking time from others in the class. (F, L, 0)

Needs more easily dealt with. Less disruption for non-disabled children. (F, T, 21)

Mainstream teachers have more time to give to children who are not disabled. (F, T, 7)

School life is very busy. Teachers are stretched with about 30 other children wanting attention. Children with special needs need a lot of support. (F, L, 14)

Less disruption for the majority of pupils. (M, H, 22)

No disruption for mainstream children. (F, T, 3)

EBD children can be very disruptive in a mainstream class thus gaining no benefit themselves and causing class to be interrupted. (F, L, 18)

Children aren't a "problem" in a mainstream school. (F, T, 10)

The "ordinary" less able children in mainstream get more attention. (F, T, 30)

When a child has severe learning needs that can't be met in mainstream school. I think it is right for them and the other children for them to be in special schooling to ensure their needs are met. (F, L, 3)

43 staff expressed a view that disabled children themselves would feel happier in a special school; 11 of these cited this as their first advantage. For example:

For people (children) to understand they are no different. (M, T, 3)

Support/identify with similar children as well as with dis-similar children. (F, T, 27)

Enables child to feel they are not alone in their specific needs. (F, L, ?)

Not singled out as being different. (F, L, 6)

Children are less likely to be teased/bullied. (F, T, 4)

Total acceptance of individuals. (F, T/S, 30)

I think at times depending on disability - allows children to feel the same as each other - not different - (F, T, 3)

Children can socialise with others who share their special needs. (F, T, 5)

Children may find it easier to cope in a special school. (F, L, 3)

Not always being behind everyone else. (F, T, 5)

Self-esteem maybe, competition too fierce in mainstream. (F, L, 4)

The dignity of the children is maintained. (F, T, 14)

Sense of inclusion not segregation. (F, H, 10)

Not feeling "different". Possibility of being "top" instead of "bottom". (F, T, 30)

Funding issues were specifically mentioned by 23 staff, 10 of whom cited this before other advantages. For example:

More money to adapt buildings. (F, H, 40)

Higher funding therefore better resources. (M, H, 18)

More funding. (F, L, 13)

Finally, a number of other considerations were put forward by 23 staff. For example:

Space in classroom. (F, T, 4)

Clear expectations. (F, T, 4)

Children/students are pushed. (F, ?, 8)

Specialist staff can support each other in delivering suitable plans. (F, H/S, 33)

Liaison with relevant outside agencies easier. (F, T/S, 16)

Support: for family as well as child. (F, L, 21)

Parents easily able to meet with other parents with similar issues. (F, T, 3)

Allow children to be part of own community (if deaf/blind) which has been shown to be beneficial. (F, T, 5)

Wishing to offer a visual representation of aggregated information, I re-entered all codes into SPSS as one new variable and created the following chart:

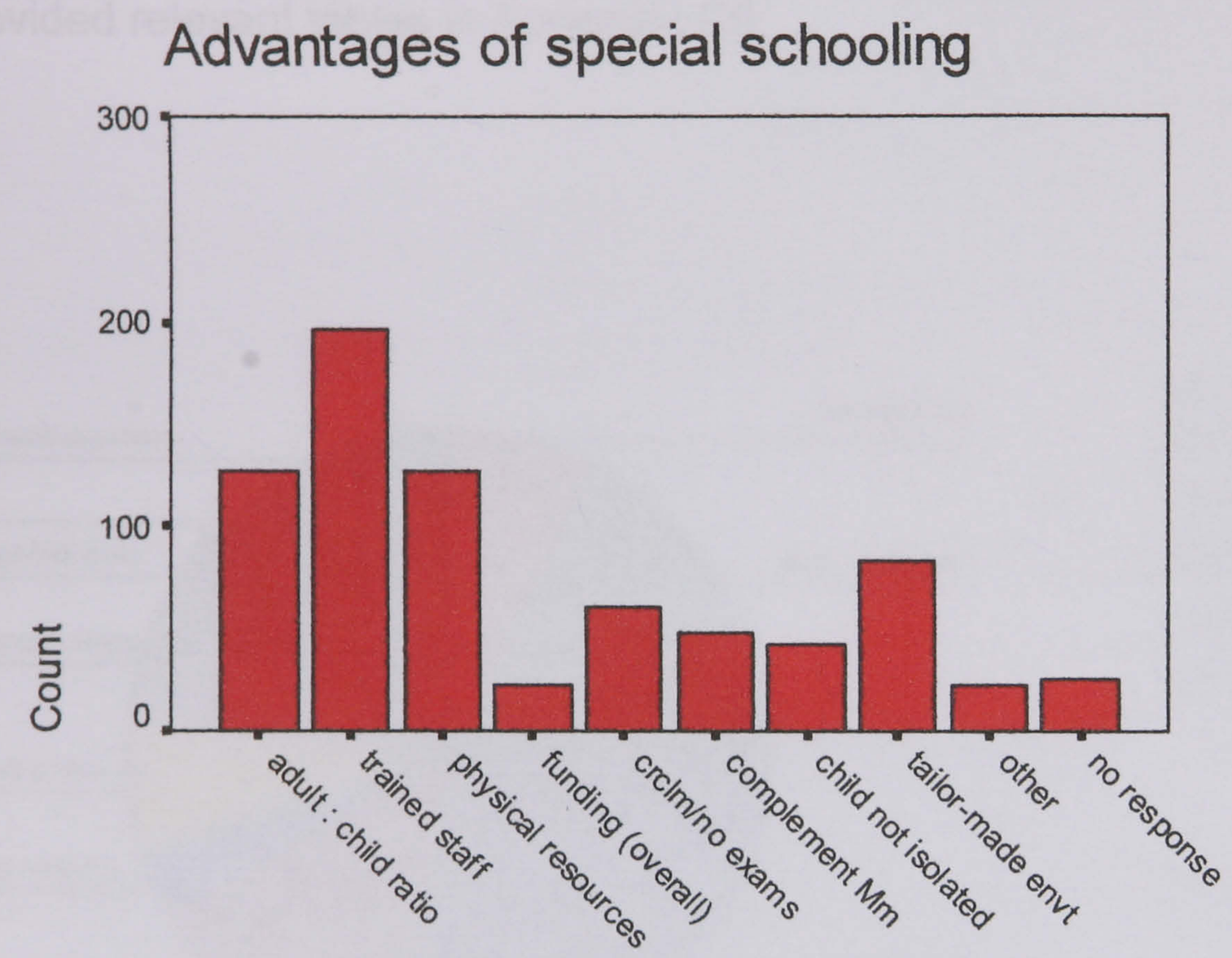

Figure 4: Reported advantages of special schooling

I also wish to offer a visual representation of the order in which these advantages were listed and have produced the following pie charts; these include missing values so as to keep totals for each chart constant,

therefore rendering slices comparable. A fourth chart is not presented here, as missing values were too great to render its eight slices distinguishable. For readers who wish to see this information in number form, I have provided relevant tables in Appendix C9.

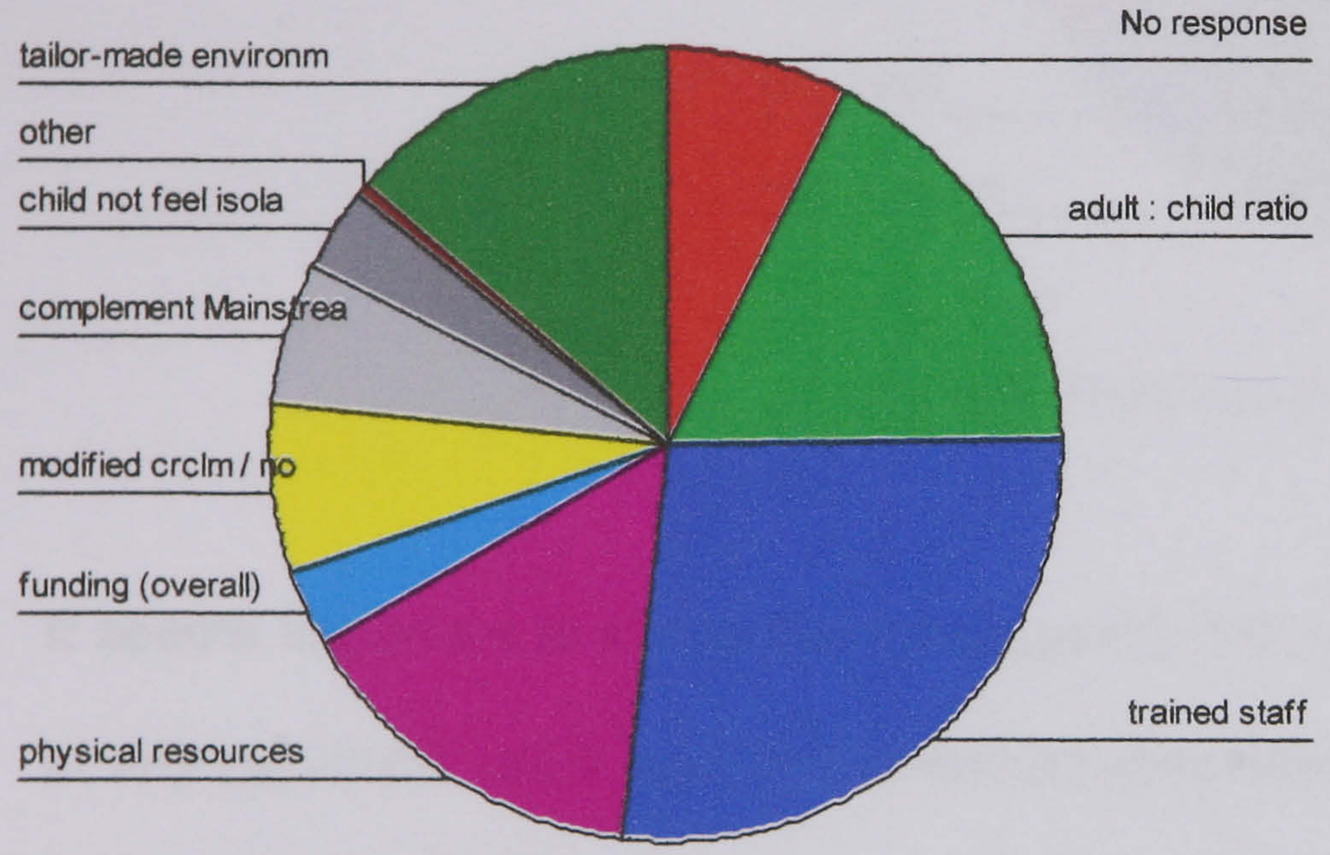

Figure 5: First advantage of special schooling

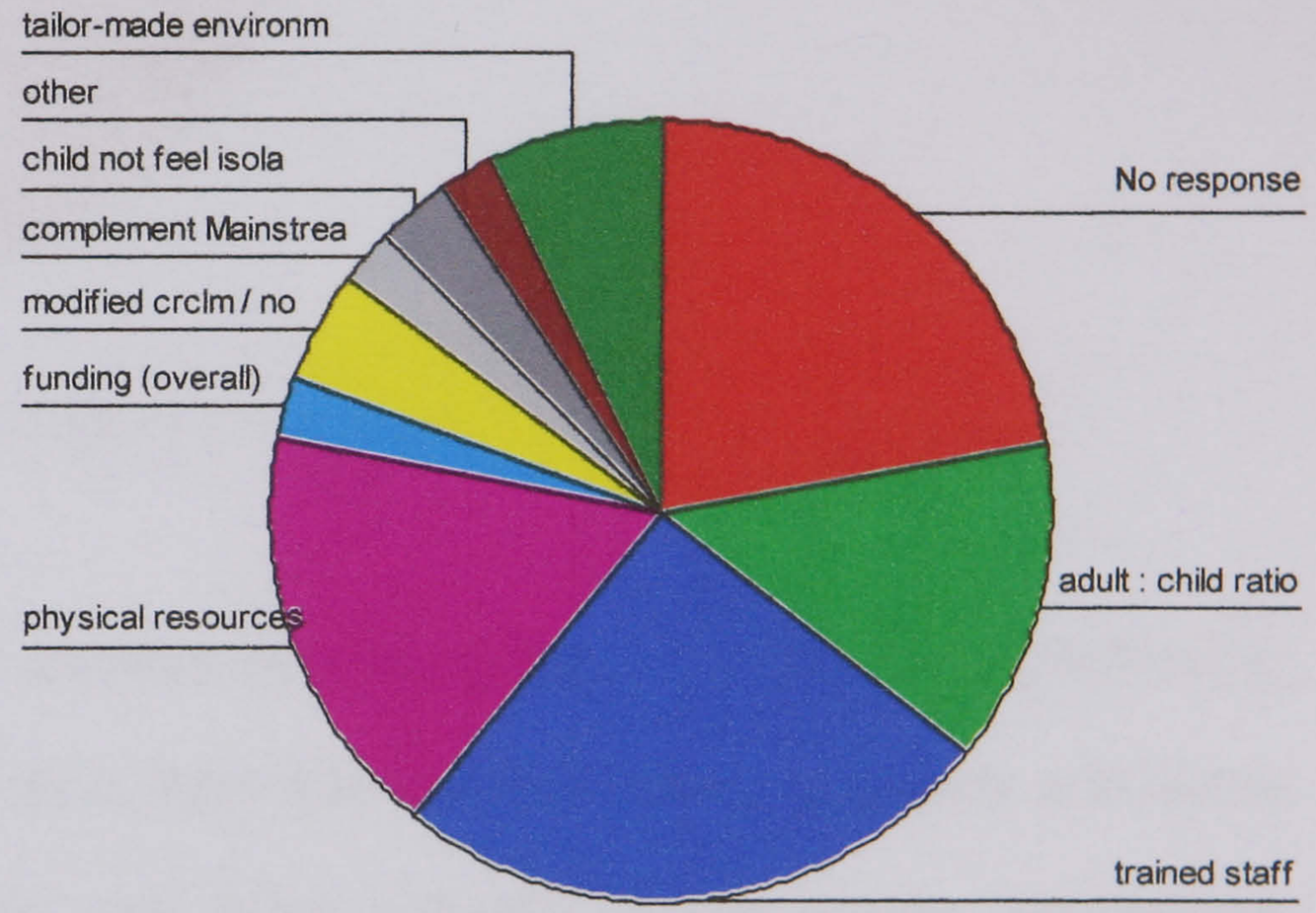

Figure 6: Second advantage of special schooling

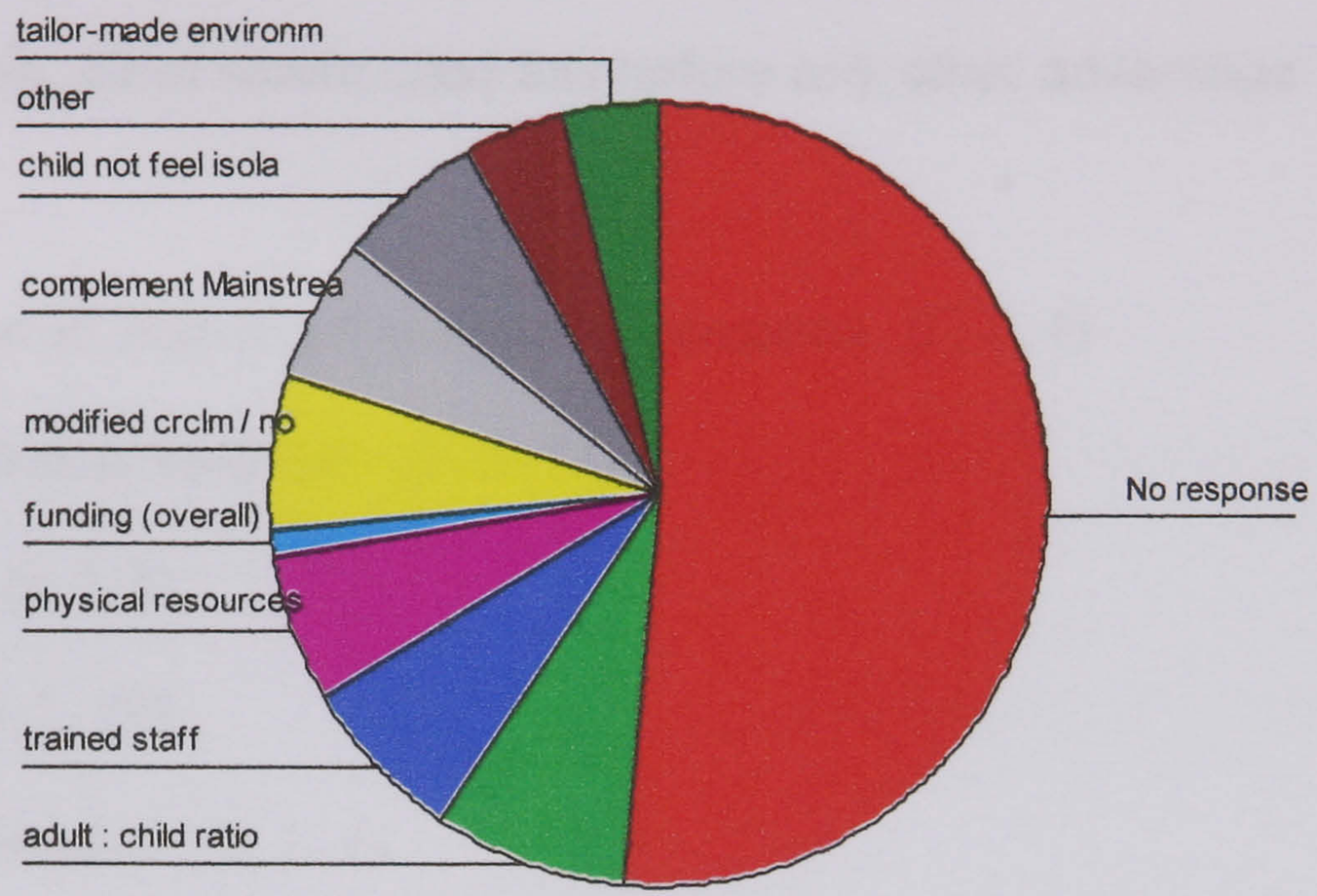

Figure 7: Third advantage of special schooling

It seems important to stress that participants had not been asked to list advantages of either type of schooling in any particular order and that questionnaires were more than likely completed in haste, probably with some knowledge of colleagues' likely or actual responses. As with other aspects of this survey, aggregated responses are offered here more as an indication of what participants' thoughts might be, than a representation of what they are. Far from resenting such ambiguity, I hope you as reader will also consider embracing it as the only option available.

With regard to expressed benefits of mainstream schooling for disabled children, 151 respondents suggested that this is correct in principle, 89 of whom cited this before any other advantage. For example:

Disability is part of society and all learn to get on and not segregated. (F, T, 4)

Acceptance as child, not labelled as 'disabled'. (F, T, 14)

Everyone's right to equality. (F, ?, 8)

Being accepted by society. (F, L, 10)

Being valued for child's individuality. (F, L, 6)

Means that children with special needs aren't hidden away, become part of the community. (F, T, 4)

Disabled child having a valid place within local community school. (F, T/S, 30)

Not shutting away the disabled. (F, D, 15)

The opportunities. Irradicating (sic) prejudice. (F, T, 0)

From a human rights perspective segregation seems wrong. (F, S, 16)

Developing attitudes into society that are positive towards "disabled children". (F, T, 3)

Gets rid of a "them and us". (F, T, 26)

Representative of society. Awareness for all. (F, T, 4)

Reduces prejudice. (F, T, 4)

Ensuring all children feel they have a place in their community. (F, H, 30)

Integration vs segregation. (F, D, 10)

125 respondents cited advantages for non-disabled children, 23 of whom presented this before any other advantage. For example:

Mainstream children benefit by taking on board the barriers and difficulties 'disabled' children face, supporting and caring. (F, T, 14)

Enables other children to become more understanding of others with disabilities. (F, L, ?)

Benefits to mainstream children of working within 'mixed' community. (M, H, 18)

"Ordinary" mainstream children learning to accept and value everyone. (F, T/S, 30)

Mainstream pupils benefit from this. (F, L, 13)

It is more an advantage for the so-called "average" child than the so-called "disabled" child. (F, D, 15)

An empathetic eye- opening experience for the majority, too. (F, T, 13)

It benefits all children in mainstream schools, for them to see disability as part of life. (F, T, 0)

Social interaction with peers was put forward by 122 respondents, 100 of whom cited this as the first advantage. I find this category particularly intriguing, because the same observation has been explicitly put forward as an advantage for disabled children by some respondents and an advantage of non-disabled peers by others; it was also often proposed without explanation of rationale. For example:

"Average" children can experience all aspects of society including children with disabilities. (F, L, 2)

Interacting with their peers of all abilities. (F, L, 11)

Social skills may improve; stay with friends. (F, L, 6)

A two-way understanding for both disabled and able-bodied children. (F, L, 10)

Variety of children to who 'disabled child' can relate; benefits to mainstream children of working within 'mixed' community. (M, H, 18)

Disabled children mixing with "normal" children. (F, D, 20)

Mixing with children. "Normal" children gain an insight into "special" children. (M, T, 2)

Mixing with peers of all abilities. Chance for all children to gain an understanding of the different needs of their peers. (F, H, 9)

Mixing with all ability and disability promotes tolerance and respect. (F, L, 6)

Helps all children improve their social skills. (M, H, 25)

Being with normal able children. (F, L, 12)

Wider social circle. (M, T, 5)

All children mix together. "Normal" children benefit. (F, T, 15)

Abled children naturally accept the disabled child. (F, L, 15)

Non-disabled children acting as appropriate role models for disabled children was specifically cited by 57 respondents, 29 of whom mentioned this before any other advantage. Despite overlapping with the above, I have kept this as a distinct category as it was often mentioned in addition to the above and seems to imply a clearer direction of benefit. For example:

Mainstream role models (e.g. with language, mobility). (F, H, 24)

Disabled children learning from mainstream peers. (F, T/S, 30)

Children mix with others who are "normal" and learn social skills and academic skills from them. (F, T, 18)

Positive role models for disabled children, especially of language and behaviour. (F, S, 16)

Role model of "normal" child to copy. (F, L, 3)

Other advantages for disabled children were cited by 119 participants, 37 of whom mentioned this first. For example:

Closeness to home (special schools not usually in their neighbourhood). (F, L, 0)

Attendance at local school. (F, S, 36)

The children don't feel segregated. (F, L, ?)

They feel less different from other children. (F, L, 10)

Pupil self-esteem from being treated as "normal". (M, H, 18)

Not to feel different from others. (F, L, 11)

No stigma. (M, T, 8)

Disabled (EBD) compare selves to "normal" children and have higher expectations of self. (F, T, 3)

To raise expectation of achievement and motivate. (F, T, 17)

Possibly higher academic achievement for some children. (F, H, 22)

Opportunities to experience activities not always available in specialised settings. (F, L, 10)

Curriculum diversity. (F, H, 40)

Broader curriculum. (F, T/S, 19)

National curriculum - chance/possible to join rest of class or have one-to-one support therefore the option is there (F, L, 1)

28 respondents suggested that mainstream schooling prepares disabled children for the future, 12 of whom mentioned this before any other advantage. My interpretation of such comments is not that special schools would not prepare children for the future but that mainstream schools prepare all children for a future which these participants envision, presumably one of social inclusion. I have chosen to keep this as a separate category both because the overlap with the first category is more perceived than stated and because this category refers to a practical benefit more than a moral standpoint. Examples of this category of statements include:

Preparation for real world. (F, S, 6)

It helps them to mix easier later in life. (F, L, 10)

Replicating real future life. (F, T, 4)

To gain experience for life of being part of a 'multi-ability' society, therefore better equipped on leaving school. (F, T, 17)

Prepares pupils for the world outside the school - a minority within the majority. (F, T, 13)

It can prepare them for being in an able-bodied world. (F, T, 0)

All children grow up to live in a "mainstream" society and are better prepared for this if they have mixed together at school. (F, A, 17)

Much easier to make the transition to "normal" life after education. (F, T, 2)

Finally, other advantages of mainstream schooling were put forward by 30 participants, 4 of them first. For example:

Parents tend to prefer mainstream. (F, L, 14)

Parental choice. (F, D, 20)

Parents feeling reassured that their child is "normal". (F, T, 5)

Help make teachers/LSA aware of differences. (F, L, 13)

Teacher knowledge would improve. (F, T/S, 16)

Extra staffing in class! (F, T, 3)

As with presenting advantages of special schools above, I re-entered in SPSS all codes for advantages of mainstream schools as a new variable and created the following bar chart:

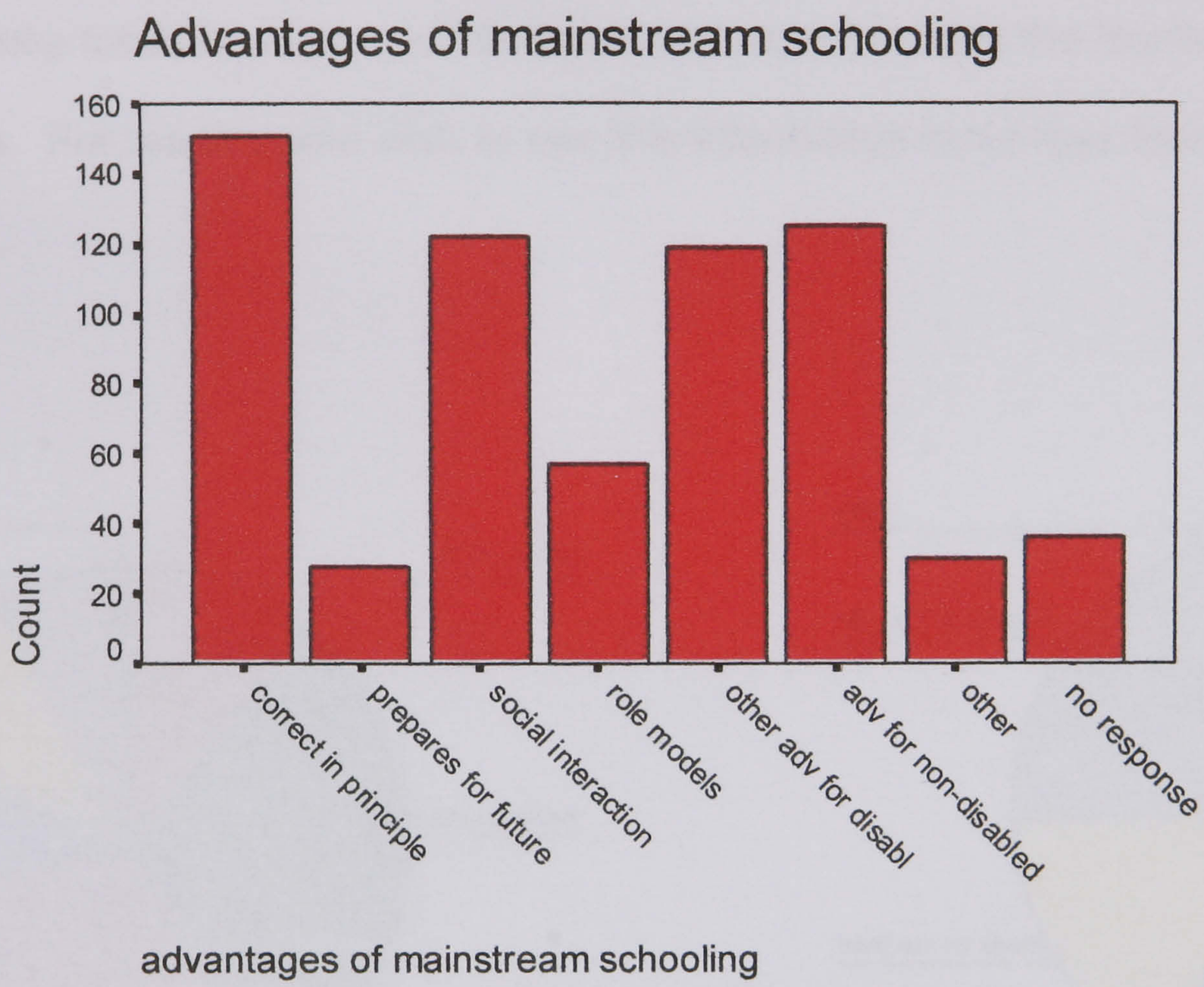

Figure 8: Reported advantages of mainstream schooling

Wishing to offer a visual representation of the order in which these advantages were listed, previous stipulations notwithstanding, I have produced the following pie charts; once again, these include missing values so as to keep totals for each chart constant and do not include the fourth chart due to the large number of missing values. For readers who wish to see this information in number form, relevant tables can be found in Appendix C10.

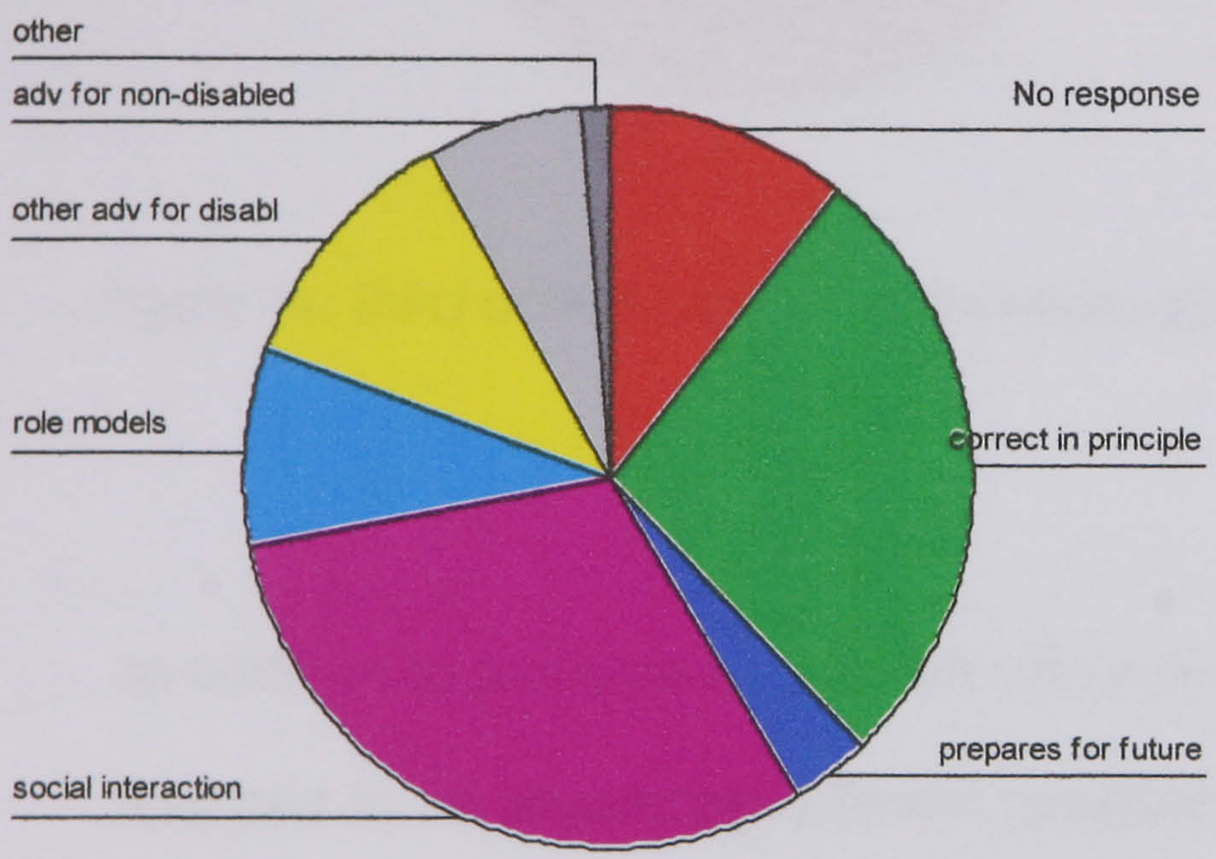

Figure 9: First advantage of mainstream schooling

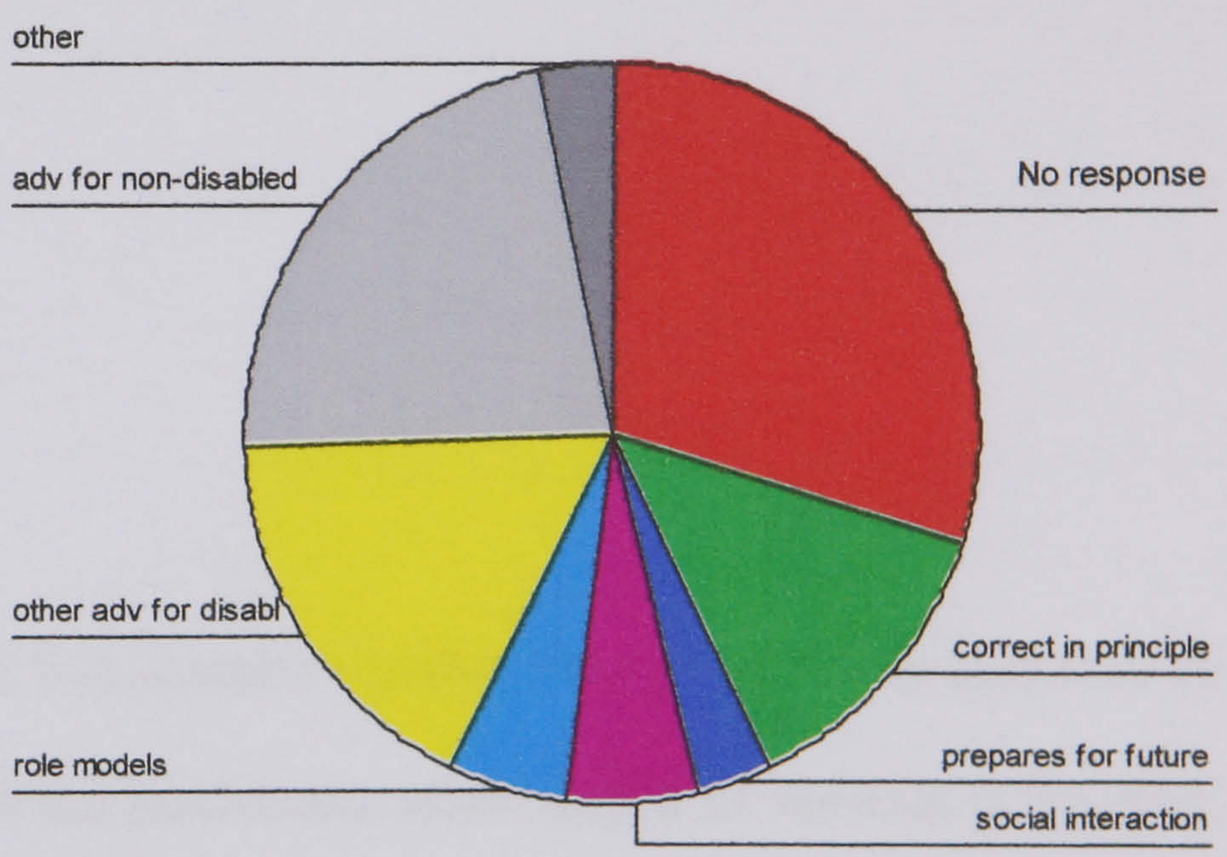

Figure 10: Second advantage of mainstream schooling

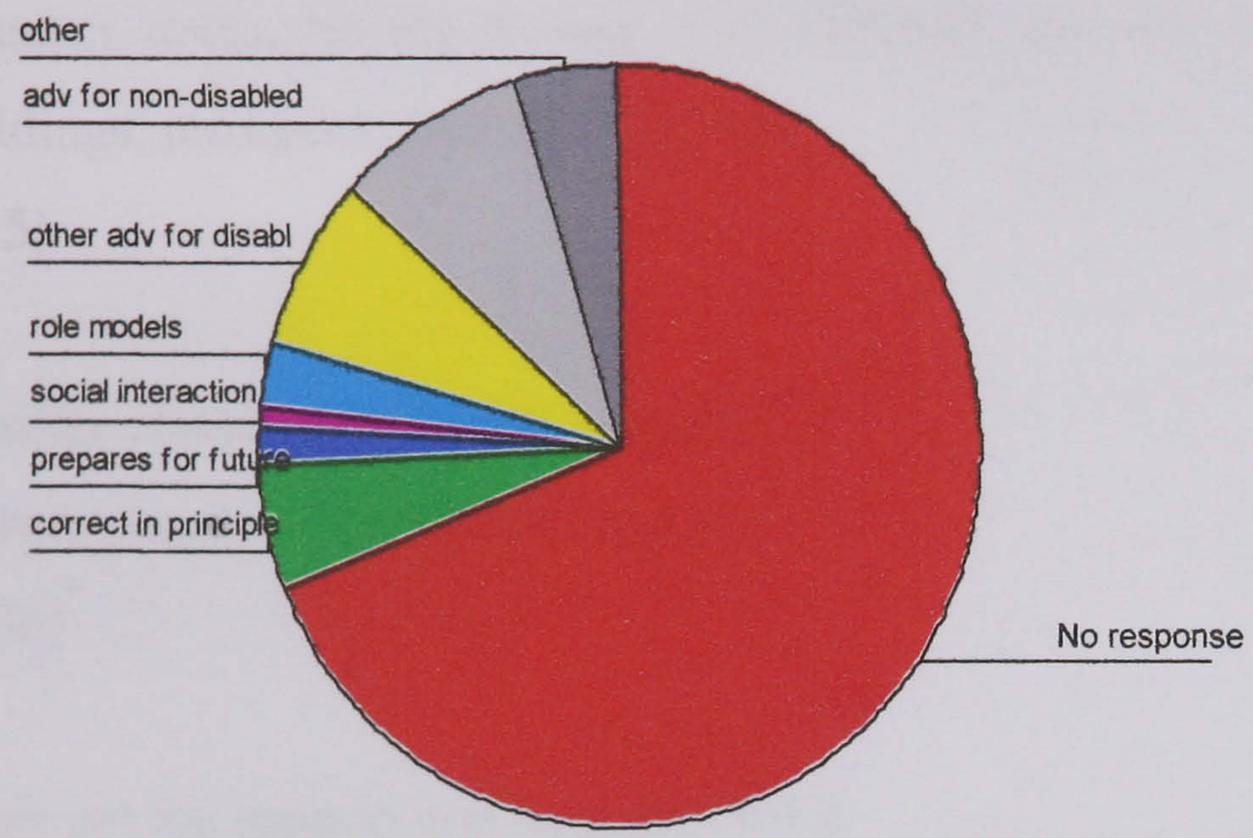

Figure 11: Third advantage of mainstream schooling

In addition to participants who left either or both parts of this question blank, others provided statements which seemed to be answering different questions. Having listed perceived advantages of special schooling, many participants went on to suggest disadvantages of mainstream schooling for disabled children. For example:

2a) Easier to teach/plan/resource. Specialised experienced teachers, funding, tailored curriculum, more human resources, focused attention.

2b) Teacher stress, having to deal with children and full range including higher ability children, provision of school buildings, resources, lack of experience.

(M, T, 5)

2a) Smaller classes, more adult support.

2b) Larger classes. Little adult support.

(F, L, 30)

2a) They get the support and help they need.

2b) They get to mix with others. Other children learn greater tolerance. DISADVANTAGE: They're not given enough special support and are left to flounder.

(F, T, 1)

2a) Smaller class numbers, specialist support with more attention.

2b) Too much pressure on teachers. Entails extra planning, managing 29 children as well as children with special educational needs.

(F, T, 10)

2a) More individual attention; smaller classes. Clear expectations and greater flexibility with sanctions (more support). Greater curriculum flexibility.

2b) Last academic year (03-04) had two children with autism in my class. Both disruptive, one highly disruptive and teaching/learning was affected on a daily basis. Stressful.

(F, T, 4)

Two participants volunteered contrasting perceptions of when each type of schooling may be suitable:

2a) For physical disabilities or emotional difficulties child requires specialist intervention or facilities.

2b) For minor and transient problems.

(F, T, 16)

2a) All pupils need to be included as they are part of our society. Very disabled pupils should be in a unit attached to a school.

2b) Schooling is for everybody if we are to accept everyone.

(F, H, 30)

Some respondents volunteered their perception of conditions for mainstream schooling and/or their evaluation of how things look in practice, for example:

2a) A tailored curriculum to the child's individual needs. More one-to-one support.

2b) None (but obviously depending on what actual disability they have!) If physically disabled, as long as the school is adapted to their needs then inclusion would be no problem.

(F, L, 1)

2a) Advantage of smaller classes, fully trained staff, better facilities - often unable to be funded by mainstream class.

2b) Integration, for mainstream to be aware of disabilities to offer equal opportunities for those able to access it but it needs to be funded fully, not done on the cheap.

(F, D, 25)

2a) Working in a small group with a trained specialist teacher. Catering specifically for their needs, enabling lots of hands on/practical experiences. Nurturing their self-esteem.

2b) Working alongside their peer group but only where supported by full-time LSA wider experience of literacy/language. Withdrawal support group very important for CORE subjects.

(F, T, 33)

2a) Specialist experts in the field of need can plan and structure (through knowledge and expertise) the appropriate programme of support which includes academic, emotional and physical needs.

2b) Special children being treated as they should be, as a full important member of the community. However, at the present time that need is being unbelievably underfunded/resourced. The most vulnerable are not being given the opportunity they should be.

(M, H, 35)

2a) Some children (SEN) do not really benefit long-term from being in mainstream esp. if they are token/minority group.

(F, A, 20+)

2a) Referring to children with social/educational needs - not physical. Children have work better suited to them. If too many "disabled" children are in one class others suffer. Certain schools have a great "overload" of these type of children and become "dump" schools because other parents view them as this incorrectly.

2b) Children can mix socially - in theory.

(F, D, 32)

2a) Specialist teaching and wider range of specialist materials.

2b) Some children - very few - need to work in a small group all the time with an adult; how will mainstream schools do this without a lot more money and resources? What if there are several of such children in a mainstream school?

(F, S, 17)

2a) no response

2b) Children mix with others who are "normal" and learn social skills and academic skills from them. Must have support for these children. Primary schools often not given cash for this.

(F, T, 18)

2a) There are some children who can never be included in mainstream because either a) their behaviour is totally inappropriate and they will disrupt the education of others or b) their disabilities are so great they need very special (nursing?) care and a special environment.

(F, L, 10)

Looking at the overall pattern of responses, it seems that benefits of mainstream schooling are primarily seen as a matter of moral values, whereas benefits of special schooling mostly relate to the way provision is perceived to be organised in these settings. This seems to echo relevant literature. I find it remarkable, though not necessarily surprising, that issues presented as advantages of special schooling by some respondents (for example appropriate curriculum, increased expectations or diminished feelings of isolation) have been put forward as advantages of mainstream schooling by others. Similarly, the presence of disabled children in mainstream settings has repeatedly been cited as both an advantage and a disadvantage for their non-disabled peers. On the other hand, I find it intriguing that the higher adult-to-child ratio frequently cited as an advantage of special schools has not been matched by references to one-to-one support, sometimes available in mainstream schools for pupils with statements. This, however, may have been shaped through the transient or limited nature of such arrangements, overall class sizes and/or issues of staff training. I have wondered about the source of perceptions such as the 'tailor-made environment' of special schools and have become increasingly curious about the foundations of evaluative comments on special schools; in particular, I often wondered about the extent to which these may be rooted in experience of, or assumptions about, special schools. Remembering Jenny Corbett's observation that the term 'special' may harbour assumptions about something being 'better' (Corbett, 1996: 49-50), I chose to follow this up in the qualitative phase of this project.

I found the apparent co-existence of multiple philosophical standpoints intriguing: some respondents seemed to be evaluating provision from a mainstream school perspective, foregrounding the needs of the majority and expecting mainstream provision to remain unaltered; others seemed to be appraising possibilities from a disability perspective, foregrounding entitlements of a minority and citing society's ethical responsibility; while yet others seemed to be collectively occupying a multitude of standpoints combining ethical and practical considerations. Attempting to describe alternative philosophical positions, however, does not seem to do them justice; I would urge readers who have not perused all quotes on previous pages to return to these and attempt to construct their own understanding of participants' standpoints. This, not because I consider myself a poor master of words but because I believe that the richness of human experience and thought cannot be adequately conveyed through the relatively poor medium of abstract statements.

Before leaving the issue of reported advantages for alternative types of provision, I wish to stress my belief that there are multiple ways of understanding the statements presented in response to this question, not least due to the context in which these were generated and the sheer volume of words devoid of opportunity for further discussion. Despite the manner of representing my understanding, I consider it inappropriate to envisage individuals' perspectives to be as neatly compartmentalised as the above descriptions and graphs may seem to

imply. Far from intending to fragment a web of complex interrelated issues, I have attempted to render one perception of constituent strands explicit, in order to facilitate an understanding of the whole.

Responding to question three of the questionnaire, 20 participants (6.1%) indicated that they rarely or never think about these issues, 124 (37.6%) suggested that they do so occasionally, 113 (34.2%) specified often and 69 (20.9%) said they think about these issues every day. 4 participants (1.2%) did not respond to this question. In diagrammatic form this information looks like this:

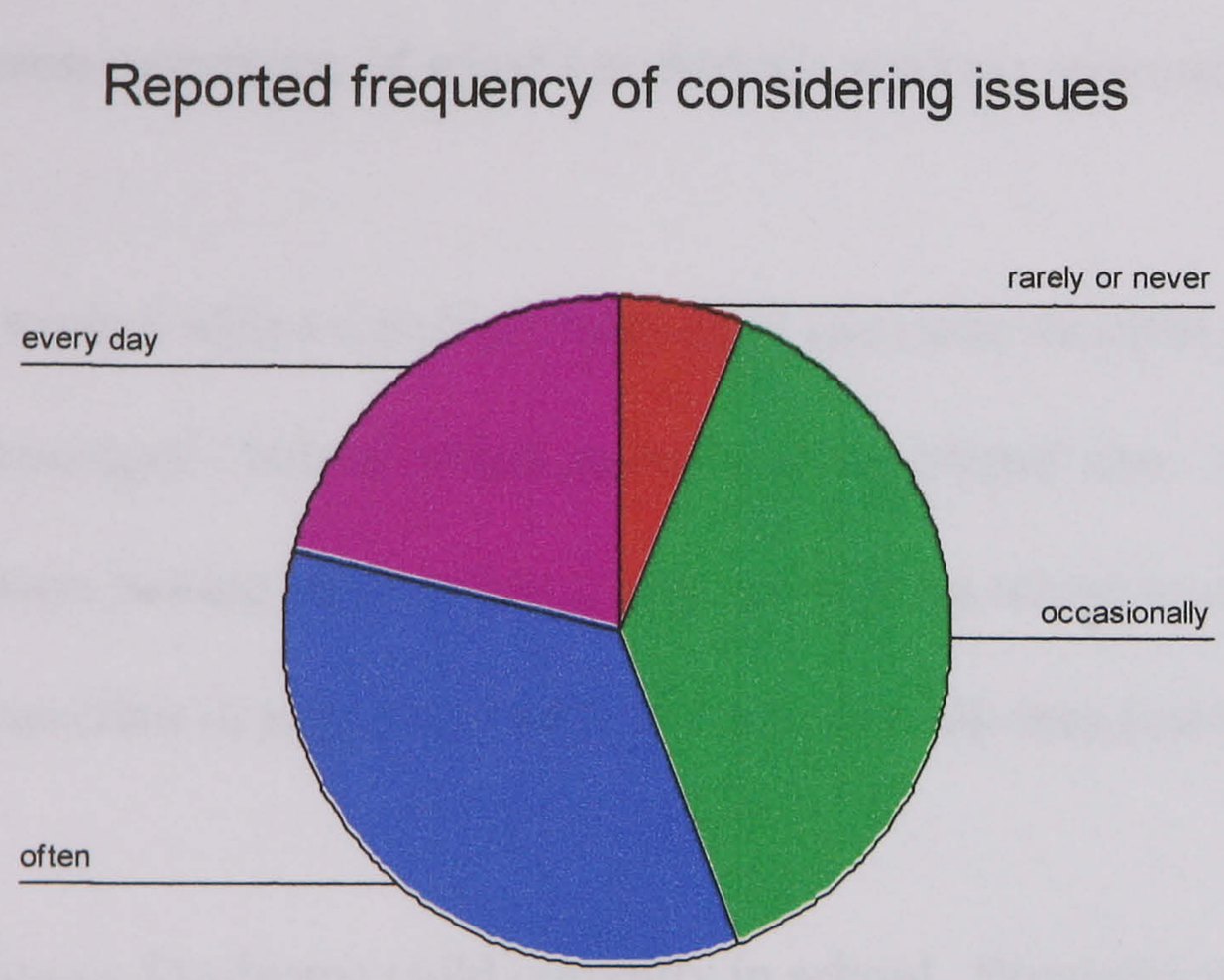

Figure 12: Reported frequency of considering issues

Responding to question four, significant encounters with disability, 60 respondents (18.2%) cited a positive experience of inclusion, 61 (18.5%) described a negative experience of inclusion, 65 (19.7%) mentioned some experience of inclusion without clear indication of how they perceived this, 47 respondents (14.2%) cited a non work-related experience of disability and 5 (1.5%) mentioned a positive experience of special schooling. 2 participants (.6%) mentioned experience of special schooling which was not clearly evaluated and 90 participants (27.3%) did not respond to this question.

Some examples of what I coded as positive experiences of inclusion are:

"I worked with a Cerebral Palsy child (sic) who touched the hearts of many who came into contact with him. He encouraged / helped others more than they helped him. Always happy and smiling, never relating to his disabilities always joining in everything, often prompting others to participate. Other children in his class never referred to his wheelchair or asked him why he couldn't walk they just accepted him for the person he was." (F, T, 7)

"Downs Syndrome child currently in school. Provision of support enables her to take part & greatly benefits rest of school." (F, A, 20)

"At a Year 3&4 swimming gala a disabled child was aided into the pool and walked a width holding her teacher's hand. Her fellow pupils cheered and chanted her name and were thrilled that she completed the 'swim'. Her face beamed with pleasure and pride. Six weeks previously she refused point blank to even get a toe wet. But with the support of teacher, LSA and peers she had made a huge achievement. What I really remember is how proud her fellow pupils were, they were with her every step of the way.

Every day in Infant School observing how children accept differences and learn to appreciate that someone who is different still has a lot to offer and can be a good friend. The difference that may seem obvious to an adult can completely disappear through the eyes of a child."

(F, L, 3)

"Working in a school with downs syndrome/autistic children helped me reconsider teaching styles & strategies." (F, T, 3)

"A child going to special school for two years and then joining a mainstream school was so happy and far more able than thought at first. He just moved on very quickly." (F, L, 22)

"I taught a child who was educationally blind and [had] cerebral palsy in a mainstream reception class. I really felt enriched by the experience and believe it enriched other pupils. I also feel it was right for her as she had displayed many behaviours which were unhelpful and as she learned from other children she became more and more able to cope and her progress was rapid. I feel if she had gone to a special school, this would not have happened as her role models would have been so varied." (F, A, 17)

Examples of what I coded as negative experiences include:

"In my experience, children who have SEN have so much time out of the classroom because they are unable (or at times unwilling) to keep up with the rest of the class. This results in a very separate education for them. This becomes increasingly isolating for them as they progress to the end of Key Stage 2. This defeats the whole idea of integration and surely the SEN child would be much happier and better catered for in a special school." (F, L, 8)

"I have felt extremely dispirited if I have been unable to address the special needs of perhaps one pupil in my class. I have felt very frustrated by the effect that one pupil has on the rest of the class if a large percentage of my time is necessarily focused on that child." (F, T, 10)

"Children with additional needs whose statements are not in place at reception age. Children on IEPs – lip service given only. There is not enough money to buy in training / support / advice. Children get minimal help from LSA and that's okay – not if it was my child!" (F, L, 4)

"Pupil age 10, can't really talk, can't spell his name, poor co-ordination, socially vulnerable, mainstream is generally not a good experience for him. The time I spend with him mean others loose (sic) out." (F, T, 8)

"As a school which has a behavioural unit, it sometimes disturbs the younger children to 'witness' aggression and listen to bad language. Also the older children sometimes encouraged by bad behaviour." (F, T, 2)

"I had a very disruptive child in my class last year who, at times, would turn over tables, chairs, empty drawers and rip paper off the wall. He would also bite and kick adults. He had had a 'statement' refused twice by the LEA. It was extremely difficult to cope with 28 other children when one of these 'episodes' took place. Finally, after a term he was given a statement. Unfortunately the number of points allocated did not equate to a full-time LSA and I know that the school have had to subsidise this post above and beyond what would normally be expected. I feel that provision for these children in mainstream schools should be adequately resourced." (F, T, 23)

"Disabled children in mainstream schools will only work when the needs of the disabled children are met; the needs of other children are met and the needs of staff are met." (M, H, 25)

"Have two disabled girls coming into class next year – don't have changing facilities or resources for them." (F, T, 2)

Finally, some examples of what I considered mixed or not clearly evaluated experiences of inclusion are:

"I have taught a child with Downs and she was happy at our school when she was younger but now she is 10, I feel she needs more. She does not seem happy now. I'm not sure what she needs but she has lost her sparkle." (F, T, 7)

"Working alongside a blind person on our Inclusion Steering group. Managing all issues re: a wheelchair bound pupil. Both have served to heighten my awareness of disability issues." (M, H, 18)

"I work with children with autism and Asperger's. It has made me appreciate there are many different ways of learning and that inclusion can only work with relevant and appropriate support." (F, L, 6)

"Teaching a child with a disability in PE affected me by having to further the differentiation of the lesson involving the child as much as possible." (F, T, 7)

"I have a visually impaired child in my class at the moment. I'm much more aware of the vulnerability that some people may feel because of their disability and the coping mechanisms they use. Also of the positive effect on the other children. Also the extended amount of work required." (F, T, 3)

"Child at school with M.S. will soon be in [a] class which is at top of flight of stairs – no lift at present – makes me cross." (F, L, 6)

"Pupil from inclusion class who moved from attending occasional lessons to being full time in my class – a real success story. Member of own family with severe special needs – mainstream school claimed to be able to meet needs, but totally unprepared / unable to cope, thus disrupting progress already made with her. Two sides of a coin!" (F, T, 20)

Non work-related experiences of disability occasionally mentioned books or TV programmes but mostly included personal experiences, such as:

"My friend's daughter has cerebral palsy and is the same age as me. I was scared when I met her because of my lack of experience at that age. I have since taught children with CP and believe they need to be educated alongside mainstream." (F, D, 10)

"I spent 9 months in a wheelchair many years ago due to surgery. During that time I became painfully aware of how society views people in wheelchairs. I often experienced people assuming that I couldn't talk or respond to questions. I feel strongly that the more disabled people mix with non-disabled people the better understanding we will have of each other." (F, L, 13)

"A friend who has autistic twin boys. I have heard & seen how much they have benefited from a special school." (F, L, 4)

"A person describing his education in a special school and the stigmatisation and sense of failure this left him with." (F, H, 26)

"Disabled friend coping with pubs & clubs, shocked & upset by treatment & response he received." (F, D, 9)

Descriptions of positive experiences of special schools included:

"I have also worked in a special school many years ago. The children were mentally and physically disabled, and there was no way they could have gone to a primary school due to medical problems. The children, I feel, benefited from a small group environment where they could have lots of time and attention focused on them. A large class would have frightened the children." (?, L, ?)

"I have visited a 'special school' and was overwhelmed by staff dedication." (F, T, 3)

I was keen to explore the possibility of a relationship between participants' personal experiences of disability and type of school advocated for most disabled children. Although these numbers are relatively small, positive experiences of inclusion seem to be linked with support for mainstream schooling.

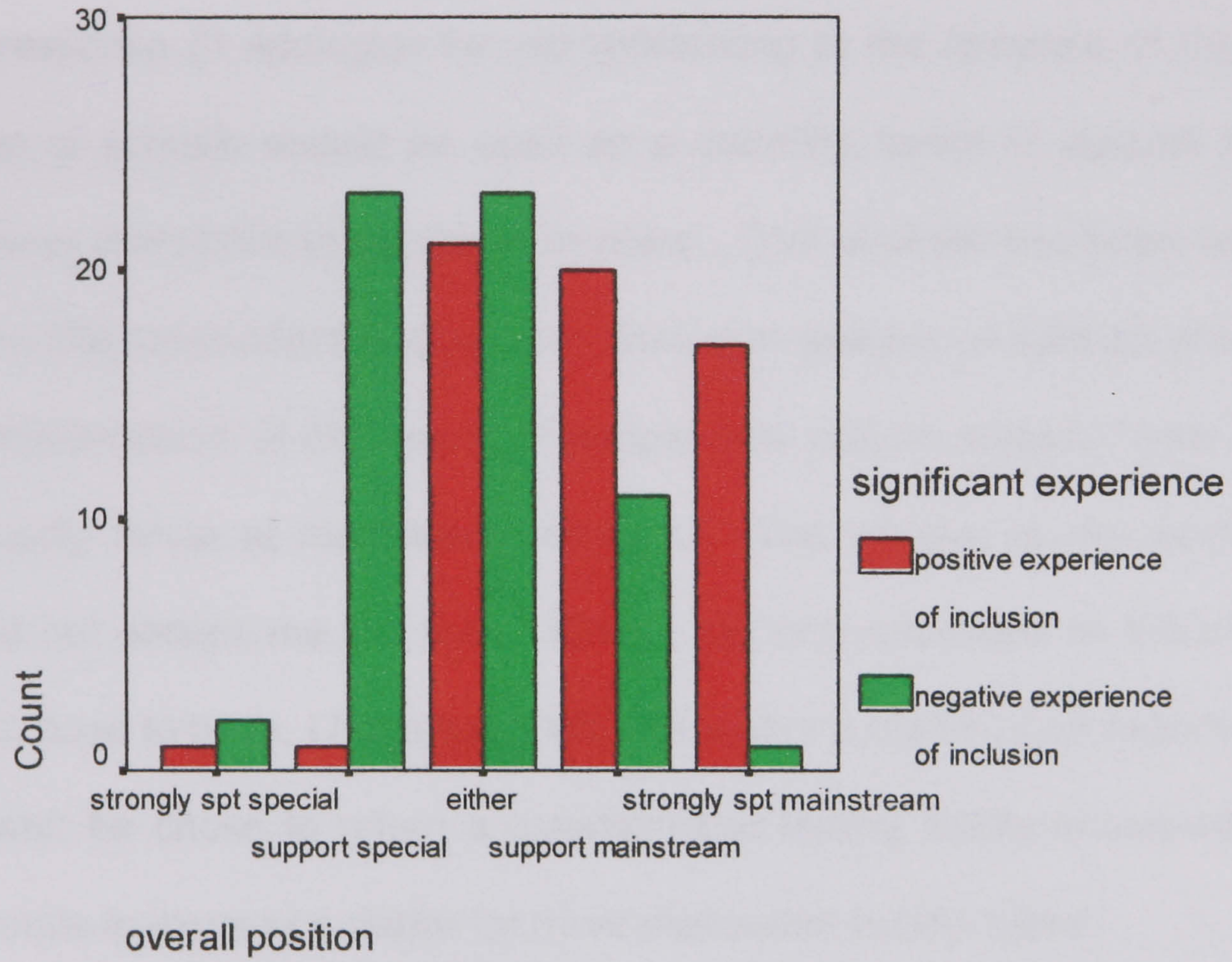

Figure 13: Significant experience of disability and type of school advocated

One questionnaire which had repeatedly escaped my notice, possibly due to the lack of quantifiable information conveyed, has recently captivated my attention. This questionnaire only answered question three, indicating the respondent rarely or never considers these issues, and partly answered question five, indicating that the respondent is male and has one year's experience in primary schools. Question two had the beginning of a response ("I apologise for not conforming to the template of the questionnaire but I feel the inclusion policies of schools should be used as a debating forum to discuss the needs of individuals that require support over and above to put things in place...") all of which had been crossed out. On the reverse of the questionnaire this respondent had written: "Inclusion policies of schools should allow discussion to take place on the considerations of the needs of people who require support "over and above" what is – at the moment – ordinarily made at mainstream schools." The allusion to my words at the introduction of the questionnaire did not escape me this time. While I can only speculate on the content of the discussions this participant would hope to have, I have been left with a strong sense of somebody who seems to feel his voice is not being heard; he chose to return a questionnaire having hardly answered the questions posed, while making two attempts to express a desire for more discussion to take place.

I left the quantitative phase with my conviction in the merit of pursuing inclusive practice considerably shaken. I had previously believed that disabled children should be placed in mainstream schools as a matter of principle and that this alone would enable practitioners to engage with disability and, in time, generate wider support for inclusion. Research had seemed to support this view (please see pages 72-76). I was aware of staff often expressing reservations in anticipation of practical difficulties of including a disabled child, but had more often than not seen such fears allayed in the light of experience. This survey provided a window into the lived experience of practitioners and, despite my previous encounters with mainstream staff from an advisory role, some findings truly took me by surprise. Had previous research only offered a partial picture, or has the picture been changing over time? In addition to an expected level of support for inclusion, the emerging picture revealed frustration and discontent far more widespread than I had previously perceived; indeed, some practitioners seemed to have resistance to inclusion *strengthened* in the light of experience, often feeling exasperated and not listened to. This 'panoramic view', hazy though it might be, seemed to convey one clear message: practitioners' support for inclusion seems strengthened by *positive* experiences; unpleasant ones seem to fuel reservations, if not resentment. I was aghast at the thought that, in the name of fundamental entitlements of disabled children, fundamental entitlements of practitioners may have been undermined. All in all, I saw this as quite a disturbing 'hazy panoramic view', nonetheless one well worth obtaining.

Qualitative phase: Introduction

I entered the qualitative phase of this project more curious than ever before: How might mainstream school staff weigh up moral and practical considerations when appraising the possibility of working with disabled learners? If they perceive these as conflicting, how might they attempt to reconcile them, in their own minds? How might their previous experiences inform their thinking? To what extent might they ordinarily engage with such issues? And, if they do, how might they choose to carve a way forward? More than ever before I was ready to explore, in an attempt to understand and represent, practitioners' perspectives.

This seems a good point to address what the term 'perspectives' might mean. The Oxford Dictionary (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 1084) defines a 'perspective' as "a mental view of the relative importance of things". I feel a need to expand on this, to convey a fuller picture of my use of the term. There may be numerous ways to acquire a 'mental view', painstaking rational thinking or swift adoption being but two examples. Seeing perspectives as mental constructs could be doubly inappropriate: they may be shaped as much by cerebral as by emotive processes; and to consider them as constructs may ascribe them rigidity they do not possess. Finally, in exploring staff perspectives, far more than 'the relative importance of things' which may be summed

up as an ordered list of issues, I was interested in participants' lived experience, the way they made sense of this and their overall appraisal of current practice, including any thoughts on potential alternatives.

I have deliberately chosen to describe this as 'exploring', rather than merely 'accessing', because of my compelling intention to engage in joint deconstruction of individuals' perspectives through Socratic-type questioning: attempting to expose assumptions and peer behind successive layers of meaning in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the whole. I am painfully aware that 'to explore' can mean to "travel extensively through (a country etc.) in order to learn or discover about it" as much as it can mean to "inquire into; investigate thoroughly" (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 493). It is definitely the latter meaning I have engaged with, not least because I believe to have explored an entity that is continuously being reshaped, potentially all the more so through the process of exploration. "Have you attempted to research something that does not exist?" I hear you ask. Far from it. But I have attempted to research something that does not exist in a fixed form. Perhaps I should add that I see this as a feature of most, if not all, social science research. To those who still feel more comfortable with more conventional forms of educational research, I offer Elliot Eisner's words: "When what one knows is how to measure, one looks for what one can measure. If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat almost everything as if it were a nail" (Eisner, 1998: 48).

Survey responses had whetted my appetite for exploring mainstream school staff perspectives. More than eager to understand an unexpected overcrowding on the middle statement of question one and keen to delve into meaning-making conversations, I looked forward to the qualitative phase adding more pieces to the jigsaw. If "how it should be in principle" is being put forward as an advantage of mainstream schooling, which principle would this be referring to and who might benefit from it? If it is that "inclusion is preferable to segregation", what is it that renders this preferable? If inclusion is considered to "enrich the lives of children", whose lives is it seen to enrich: those of mainstream children who widen their horizons, those of included children who gain a place within the horizons of their peers or both? In order to hone my skills in facilitating such explorations without asking leading questions, I undertook narrative therapy training. I believe this to have helped me pose questions which facilitate meaning-making.

Setting up the qualitative phase

In the Autumn Term of 2004 I embarked on the process of identifying two schools in which to locate the qualitative phase of this research. It seemed sensible to allow information from questionnaires to guide this; I scrutinized response rates from participating schools, in the anticipation that this could offer an indication of staff's engagement with issues. This led me to contacting two schools, which I shall call 'Welcome Park' and

'Friendlymead' Infant School respectively. Welcome Park Infants had the highest response rate among Infant schools (52%), including questionnaires returned from its Headteacher, Deputy Head and SENCo, and was one of the first schools in the LEA to be acknowledged for its inclusive ethos. Friendlymead Infant School's response rate was only slightly lower (45%) and it was the only school to have requested an extension to the deadline for returning questionnaires, which I took to indicate a willingness to participate. What is more, I had a vivid recollection of my telephone conversation negotiating participation to the survey, during which I had heard of reservations to inclusion being voiced in the staffroom (despite, I hasten to add, the school's track record of including children with statements of SEN over the past few years and working towards the LEA's Inclusion Standard at the time.) I was particularly keen to offer a forum for such reservations to be explored through this research and represented through this thesis. Having lived and worked in the area for many years, it was no coincidence that both Headteachers knew me personally; at Friendlymead Infant School I knew some of the staff as well.

I decided to approach both these schools and request to have a half-hour interview with each teaching and non-teaching member of staff. This was a compromise from the hour-long interviews I would prefer to hold, borne out of respect for these busy people's time. In recognition of the intrusion to staff's very limited time, I

decided to offer half an hour back to each member of staff who took part in an interview. I also wished to be a regular visitor/helper in one class of each school in an attempt to share, as much as possible, in the lived experience of mainstream school staff. This, I hoped, would afford me an alternative insight into the lifeworld of practitioners, through empirical knowledge, in the sense of "the empiricism of direct experience, which, after all, is the root meaning of the term empirical" (Eisner, 1998: 2). Keen for my presence not to generate any discomfort for staff I decided to ask for this to be considered more as a student placement, finding out about the school, than a researcher's presence and chose to ask for my presence to be considered as more a pair of hands than a pair of eyes.

The process of negotiating access turned out to be very different between the two schools. I contacted both schools and left messages for the Headteachers at the beginning of December, admittedly a very busy time of year. The Head of Welcome Park Infants responded within an hour, agreeing in principle and suggesting that I attend a staff meeting the following term to present this project to staff. This took place in February, following which a Year One teacher indicated she was happy to have me in her class for half a day a week for a term or more. I wrote to the school, generating a written record of our agreement (please see Appendix D1). I started regular visits to this class in early March, at the same time as embarking on half-hour interviews with teaching

and non-teaching members of staff, the first few being scheduled by the Headteacher and the rest in direct negotiation with individual members of staff. This arrangement was renegotiated at Easter and continued until the end of the summer term (late July). I held sixteen interviews in this school with all but one of the teachers, including the Head, Deputy and SENCo, and about one third of Learning Support Assistants.

I have, unfortunately, no detailed records quantifying my attempts to engage with Friendlymead Infant School, but suspect these may have been infrequent. An entry in my research diary reminds me that in early March I booked a ten-minute appointment with the Headteacher to present my research and discuss the school's participation. I remember being pleasantly surprised at the ease with which the Head allowed this meeting to overrun by engaging in an animated discussion sharing much of her current thinking on issues of inclusion. I was unable to make notes straight after this meeting but looked forward to a half-hour interview to re-engage with these issues. Sadly, there was no opportunity for this. An entry in my research diary reminds me of the following: I received a telephone call from the SENCo at the beginning of the summer term inviting me to a staff meeting at the end of that day, which I attended. Following this, staff would decide whether to participate and would let me know. As I was leaving the school I pleaded for an early response, particularly if this was going to be negative, to enable me to contact another school; I was told that interviews should not be a

problem but visiting a class might. A chance meeting with the school's Headteacher the following week brought me news that the school had decided to participate and the SENCo would ring me soon. Four weeks later, at the beginning of June, the SENCo returned my call only to tell me that Friendlymead Infants did not think they can participate in this phase of the project. In a split moment of regretting not ringing the school earlier out of respect for their other priorities, not to mention experiencing acute despair at sensing the plug being pulled on an important part of this project, I referred to the Headteacher's words. We left it that I should expect another telephone call the following day. The call came, from the Deputy Head this time, apologising for the mixed messages and telling me that we can arrange for some interviews but that lack of space determined it would not be practical for me to be a visitor/helper in any class. Interviews were arranged by the Deputy Head, all of which took place after the end of the school day in order to respect the teachers' lunchbreak. Six teachers agreed to be interviewed, including the Deputy Head and SENCo, representing about half[3] of the school's teaching staff. The Head signed the letter of informed consent (Appendix D2).

In planning interviews, I had initially felt apprehensive at the prospect of engaging in conversation, having previously believed an interviewer should adopt a neutral position to avoid being a source of bias (Cohen,

[3] I have deliberately left this unclear, in order to avoid precise staffing figures compromising the school's anonymity.

Manion, & Morrison, 2000: 121). I carefully considered my understanding of the interview process and my role in it, by referring to relevant research literature and reflecting on my own experiences of being interviewed: particularly an occasion when the topic was of no interest to me and the routine way in which questions were being read from an interview schedule had served to keep me disengaged, if not careless about my answers. Particularly troubled by the notion of a 'neutral position', I eventually reasoned that even if I could find a way to suspend my position and assume a neutral one instead, participants would more than likely pick up hints of suspended values. Clear positioning, I decided, in other words sharing – if asked – both my commitment to inclusion in principle and my recently acquired uncertainty about current practice, would be preferable to attempting to feign neutrality. Far from striving to keep the interview a 'sterile' environment conducive to capturing knowledge offered, I aligned myself with seeing both interviewer and interviewee as active participants in an interactional process that constructs meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004: 140-143). Indeed, I have often included my words when representing participants' quotes in this thesis, seeing these as an integral part of the conversation. During the course of this project I became increasingly committed to the view that, as long as the interview focus remains the exploration of the participant's perspective, the more engaged the interviewer the richer the outcome. Armed with a firm commitment to Socratic questioning – interviewing,

even – as a method of exploring meaning and with skills acquired through narrative therapy training in using people's stories as vehicles to explore meaning, I was ready to pilot the interviewing process.

I invited a friend and former colleague to take part in a half-hour interview on including disabled children in mainstream schools, which I recorded with her permission. Our consonance of views provided a valuable test to my carefully considered level of participation and I did, on occasion, have to bite my tongue. Having subsequently noticed myself wearing the interviewer's hat with increasing comfort, I have come to see adeptness in interviewing as partly a matter of talent and partly a matter of skill which improves with practice, potentially ad infinitum. I transcribed this interview in full and, wishing to pilot the entire process, gave my friend a complete transcript and my attempt at summarising key points on one side of A4 paper. The rationale behind this was to share with participants my résumé of our conversation in an act of giving agency back to them, rather than retaining this as I moved from co-constructor to mediator of their views. Having considered the potential power of the written word (Josselson, 1996: 64) as well as its solidity, particularly in relation to the transience of feelings voiced (Apter, 1996: 36), it seemed vital to confer with participants on the salient points of a text before using the text to represent them.

My friend and I met on a second occasion to discuss her experience of this interview, to help me see things from her perspective and consider ways to improve the interview process. I was most concerned to find her dejectedly dismissive of her manner of speech as represented on paper: what was, to me, a verbatim transcript of conversational language as this normally occurs, seemed in her eyes to be a sad example of inarticulate speech devoid of any syntax. I changed my transcription practice in response to this and, not expecting half-uttered words or phrases to inform my analysis, omitted them from subsequent transcripts[4]; in light of this experience, I transcribed all interview conversations in complete sentences to which I added punctuation. My friend also recommended not starting an interview with a question as open as "what do you make of inclusion?" on the grounds that it can simultaneously explode multiple possible answers in one's mind and overwhelm participants. Much though I hate overwhelming anybody, in the end I decided to keep this as an opening question (having first clarified terminology) so as to leave participants an entirely open field in determining the focus, or foci, of their response.

[4] I once again found myself making interpretive judgements very early in the analytic process; occasionally such utterances felt more significant (for example 'um' followed by a pause); I included these in the transcripts, while continuing to disregard others in the name of text fluency.

Conducting the qualitative phase

I soon embarked on half-hour interviews with staff at Welcome Park Infant School. I deliberately took no written interview schedule with me, as a visible indication to participants that steering our conversation into particular areas of interest was largely up to them. Remaining aware of the possibility that these may be formulated or reformulated during the course of the interview, I carried in my mind two broad areas which I tried to ensure each conversation covered: an exploration of participants' ideological position on inclusion in principle and of their views on inclusion through the filter of current practice. I sought the first through questions about how educational provision for all children can be advanced and the second through trying to elicit stories about including disabled children in mainstream schools and exploring ways of making sense of these with regard to pros and cons of inclusion. Finally, if this had not already come up in conversation, at the end of each interview I asked about the participant's length of experience.

Implementing the above, I started each interview by reminding participants that I was interested to hear about their perspectives on working with disabled children in mainstream schools, aligning the term 'disabled' with 'special educational needs', and stressing that I was particularly keen to hear about their personal experiences and the way they made sense of these. I then asked "So, what do you make of inclusion?" and gave myself the

remit to keep the conversation focused on exploring participants' personal perspectives, following their lead on key issues and facilitating exploration with questions such as: "What would adequate support look like?". I made a conscious effort to phrase questions in ways that conveyed my genuine interest in their position, rather than appearing to be challenging this (for example: "Apologies for asking you to state the obvious, but what is it that makes you say this was not an appropriate placement?") and in ways which may have helped them feel less exposed (for example: "If you and I could plan provision differently, what might we recommend?"). Such techniques constitute aspects of my interviewing skills which improved with time.

I sought participants' consent to record each interview, explaining that this would help me focus on the conversation as well as support my research. For this I used a minidisk recorder, wishing to combine the benefits of digital technology with the advantages of retaining access to all audio recordings. Using such a device came at a price; three interviews at Welcome Park Infants failed to record, for reasons I could not comprehend at the time. My only written record of unrecorded interviews consists of notes I made based on my memory of each interview at the time I discovered the loss of data. The recording of a further two interviews, this time at Friendlymead Infants, was also lost as I accidentally ejected the battery during the 'data save'

process at the end of an hour's recording. It is possible that the earlier recordings were lost due to me disconnecting the power supply too soon. At times like these, analogue recordings seemed far preferable[5].

At the end of each interview I gave a small card to participants, with a message of thanks for their time & contribution and offering my e-mail address, explaining I would take on board anonymous messages from the school's e-mail account. The rationale behind this was to keep lines of communication open and to give all participants an opportunity to offer any clarifications or additions, including anonymous comments which may have felt too controversial to make in person. I received no e-mail communication; one participant mentioned an additional issue when she saw me in the staffroom a few days after her interview.

Processing responses

I transcribed and anonymised each interview as soon as possible, typically within days of it taking place, non-research pressures permitting. (And there were many and they did not always permit.) I used 'Dragon' voice activated software for this, believing it to speed up the transcription process. This programme converts speech

[5] I was briefly tempted by, but utterly rejected, the possibility of declaring to have conducted and recorded only 17 interviews. Not only do I remain committed to exposing 'the muddle in the middle' (Speedy, 2001: 10) but also consider it essential to utilize all the information at my disposal, whether based on interview transcripts or personal notes. Anything less would have disregarded important data, not to mention being disrespectful to people who have given up their time to participate.

to text and, since it is only 'trained' to recognise one voice, I dictated each interview while listening to it, a process still faster than touch-typing. In order to facilitate text flow, in light of the piloting experience, I omitted many repetitions and non-word utterances (for example 'um' or 'er'), as well as some short phrases which add little to meaning (for example 'sort of' or 'kind of'[6]) and added punctuation. My interventions on the text appear in square brackets, indicating either words implied but not uttered (for example: "I don't think parents should have that right to send [her] here") or anonymising (for example: "that's what we were advised to use, one of these [brand of laptops].") Instances of simultaneous speech are shown like this:

Artemi: Can I just ask you, do you have experience of special schools
yourself or are you talking from [having visited-
Celia: [No, I've never been to one.

I have provided an entire anonymised interview transcript in Appendix D3 to serve as an example, although neither this participant's strength of positioning nor my style of questioning renders this a typical example. This was the first interview I conducted, therefore not as indicative of the interview style I subsequently developed. Its choice was determined by participants' consent which, not having foreseen the value of presenting entire transcripts in this thesis, I sought more than a year after interviews took place. Two teachers and one learning support assistant gave their consent for this; both other interviews were among those accidentally not recorded.

[6] Although frequency of such utterances may indicate hesitation or ambivalence, my work for this report did not engage with this level of analysis.

Remaining committed to involving participants in the meaning-making process beyond the occasion of the interview, not least in the name of authenticity, I wrote to each one thanking them for their contribution, summarising in no more than a paragraph my understanding of their perspective and inviting them to comment on this. I hand-delivered these letters, considering them to contain confidential information, attempting to do so within days of the interview taking place. In order to produce this summary I devised a system of creating a colour-coded concept map from the interview transcript, based on the narrative therapy concepts of 'landscape of action' and 'landscape of meaning' (Morgan, 2000: 59-63)[7], and using this as the basis for generating summarising statements. I have included in Appendix D4 the letter I wrote to Tom[8], whose interview transcript appears in Appendix D3. Although not all staff responded to their letter, nobody claimed I had misunderstood them, while many participants mentioned in passing that what I had written seemed fine. I found this most affirming and helpful, particularly from the participants whose interview was not recorded, where I had drawn the concept map and summary letter from a written account of my memory of the conversation.

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[7] Although Alice Morgan refers to 'landscape of action' and 'landscape of identity', I have continued to use the corresponding terminology I learnt during my training course.
[8] Not his real name

At the same time as embarking on interviewing, I started my regular visits to one class at Welcome Park Infant School. I visited Rachel's[9] class for one or two half days each week, from the beginning of March to the end of July, frequently finding myself treading the fine line between wanting to make myself useful and not wanting to be intrusive. Although I may not have been able to articulate this at the time, the purpose of these visits was not to collect additional data for analysis, but rather to engage in an experience which I hoped would inform the process of analysis; an opportunity to immerse myself in mainstream school staff perspectives as these find expression in lived experience. It was, in other words, an opportunity for 'deep hanging out', to borrow a term which Clifford Geertz himself borrows from James Clifford (Geertz, 2000: 107-118). In anticipation of my first visit to Rachel's class I had recorded in my research diary: "I will be able to perhaps see many of the things that the teachers take for granted and may not think to tell me."

Inspired by the work of Jean Clandinin (1986) I decided to keep a 'class visit diary', separate from my research diary, for documenting and reflecting on my experiences of each day. I piloted this by utilizing an opportunity to visit a class in a different school for an hour and trying to write about this experience afterwards, without having made any notes in class. Although this proved possible for an hour's visit, I did not feel able to remember all

[9] Not her real name

events during half a school day. Reluctant to take notes while in class, seeing this as potentially off-putting for Rachel and counterproductive to offering a helpful hand, I settled for keeping small 'post-it' notes in my pocket and occasionally jotting down a word or two, to act as 'critical hooks' which would later redirect my memory to particular experiences. With the aid of these 'critical hooks' I later generated a written narrative for each visit, aiming to do so within a day or two of this taking place. Intense research activity, alongside exceptionally heavy demands on my time from multiple directions, resulted in a backlog of diary entries; as I caught up with these, sometimes weeks after the event, some 'critical hooks' failed to awaken any relevant recollection but most were an invaluable prompt to my memory. My entire 'class visit diary' comprises a series of Microsoft Word documents collectively in excess of 53,000 words. I explained to Rachel what my notes were for and offered her a chance to cast her eye over diary entries but she opted not to. I found the writing process invaluable as a vehicle for making sense of my experiences, all the more so for diary entries written retrospectively. The increased familiarity with, if not insider knowledge of, an infant school class and staff room have contributed towards developing my understanding of practitioners' perspectives and fed into both fictional pieces I have written for this thesis[10].

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[10] For example Karen, a teacher who came to interview during my second week at Welcome Park Infants, mentioned in passing that teachers are "on the go all the time" and at first I thought I knew what she meant. After weeks of immersing myself in the lifeworld of mainstream school practitioners, however, these words acquired a powerful resonance which I believe no description of experience could have generated. I have attempted to convey this by scripting Mary to say "people who think they know what it's like to be a teacher are like childless adults who think they know what it's like to be a parent" ('Morning Break at Mara Santime Infant School' p. 253)

At about this time I went to a concert and, during the interval, got talking to a friend of a friend's. As soon as it transpired that she was a primary school teacher and I was researching inclusion, we found ourselves absorbed in an animated conversation about the desirability and feasibility of inclusion. She was openly critical of the current system and, as I casually slipped into my interviewer role, she passionately clarified and expanded on her views. As we were rounding off our conversation and returning to our seats, she added a comment along the lines of 'Of course, I wouldn't be telling you all of this if you had come to interview me at school'. This entire encounter posed a considerable methodological dilemma: could I welcome such a raw perspective into my project or should I close the door on it? Having unexpectedly found myself in precisely the kind of unguarded interaction I wanted my interviews to yield, disregarding it would seem to deprive the project of rich data. I felt on ethical safe ground, as she knew she was talking to a researcher. On the other hand, my research design clearly did not include collecting data from casual conversations with strangers. I eventually conceded that I had to discard the content of this conversation in the name of methodological integrity. I also accepted, however, that this experience had had an impact on my self as the analytic tool in this project. I carried forward an understanding grounded in this experience, that conversations framed within social science are potentially, if not inescapably, performed on a platform of increased caution.

When I had finished transcribing all recorded interviews, the word count for all transcripts collectively was close to 80,000 words. While waiting for my department to make a software package available, I repeatedly read interview transcripts and recorded my initial reflections by inserting text in a different font colour to clearly distinguish my subsequent thoughts from the interview conversation. In February 2006 I undertook training in NVivo2, the qualitative analysis software package made available by my department, and was immediately taken with the programme's versatility in manipulating text, swiftly executing actions like grouping identified extracts together or displaying coded text, while leaving the user in sole control of interpretive judgements. I also enjoyed the flexibility of reading documents with or without current coding in view, so that today's perceptions literally do not have to colour tomorrow's reading.

I imported all interview transcripts and summary letters into NVivo and utilized the memo facility by transferring all of my own comments into memos. By choosing to create these as hyperlinked text, I was able to keep my reflections accessible at the click of a button, while regaining the advantage of uninterrupted text flow. I continued adding memos with each successive reading of transcripts and remain intrigued at the observation that new meanings and insights continued to emerge. Experience may some day tell me whether I brought the

analysis process to a premature close or whether saturation may be a self-fulfilling prophecy (or both). I offer here two interview extracts with corresponding memos, to serve as examples:

> "So a lot of the time you feel actually they are being fobbed off a bit because, you know I've never been sure of this: at this age if that's what they really want to do, and it keeps them quiet and happy then maybe it is what they ought to be doing too! So I'm not sure. But I'm sure that if OFSTED and people come in, they wouldn't be happy. I think that's how a lot of these children's needs are met."
>
> Memo: Is he setting double standards or does this argument hold for all children? If any other four-year old preferred to play rather than participate in class, would he suggest that teachers should let them play?

> "So she stayed in there with her helper most of the time, and it was hoped to slowly integrate her into her class at small chunks. But it just didn't work because she would hear something when she was in that room going on in the classroom that she decided she wanted to join in. And then she would come in, perhaps sing, make a noise, do a dance, and disrupt everybody else. And then if you tried to settle her down and sit in her place, (...) she would very often decide she didn't want to sit there and if it didn't go her way it would cause enormous tantrum where she had to be removed. So, you know, I think it just depends on what their disability is, whether it works or not."
>
> Memo: It depends on the child and their disability but not on the environment as created by the school? (Consider quoting Donna Williams on the autistic child's perspective)

My next step was to code all transcripts, letting categories emerge from successive readings of the texts. Having kept all interviews focused, every part of every interview seemed most relevant and I generated a large number of categories. These reflected the multitude of issues arising from the interviews as well as, inevitably, my awareness and sensitivity with regard to them.

In the next phase of the analysis I reviewed the coding categories that had emerged and, judging the scope to be too wide, reduced these to what seemed more manageable for a doctoral research project. This necessary narrowing of focus left out of the analysis issues such as the notion of 'adequate support', participants' level of engagement, their opening statements and concerns about terminology, as I deemed their absence least likely to impoverish the final report. I also left out further exploration of the relationship between previous experience and current perspectives, as this echoed the picture from the survey. I finalised coding categories as:

Content:
- support for inclusion:
  - reasons for support
  - extent of support
- reservations to inclusion:
  - funding
  - time & impact on other children
  - space
  - training
  - resources
  - LSAs
  - lack of support
  - lack of strategic planning
- support for special schools
- suggested ways forward

Form: positioning

sense of agency

the needs of the child

use of specific words

With coding categories finalised, I saved my project under a different name in NVivo and coded all transcripts again from scratch, believing that the project would benefit from my increased experience. I did this electronically and, having learnt the hard way, backing up on paper. As well as NVivo creating a separate document for each coding category, I also maintained a manual record for each category by jotting down a summary statement of each extract assigned to it and a reference to its source.

When recoding of all transcripts was completed, I undertook an analysis of each coding category in turn. I invested time and energy to interrogate coded extracts and to seek meanings across all transcripts within each category. By focusing on a small part at a time I gradually developed a picture of the whole, remaining aware that this emerging view of practitioners' perspectives would continue to take shape through the writing process. As a further authenticity check I re-read the summary letters written to all participants after their interview, to ensure I had not overlooked any salient points significant for practitioners. It appeared that I had not.

As a result of emergent understandings, responses to question one of the questionnaire, which had previously puzzled me, were now beginning to make more sense. I had posed that question as though support for inclusion in principle could be gauged on a unidimensional scale; I was now beginning to understand that framing this as a choice of alternatives in binary opposition could only serve to limit interpretive possibilities. Furthermore, despite my best efforts to avoid this, the question seemed to conflate ideological positioning with experience: having originally expected this question to generate abstract possibilities in respondents' minds, my increased familiarity with practitioners' mindsets now led me to think it had probably prompted them to envisage alternative scenarios within the framework of current practice.

In September 2006 I discussed my understanding of practitioners' perspectives with staff at Welcome Park Infant School (please see pages 256-270) and a few weeks later presented this at the European Conference on Educational Research in Geneva[11]. On my return, I embarked on the gruelling task of attempting to represent practitioners' perspectives on paper.

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[11] Having submitted an abstract months in advance, I found myself working with a title that no longer represented my thinking: "Route to social equality or educational Frankenstein? Diverse perceptions of inclusion", alluding to a construct created on good intentions but evolving into an Unwanted Other that people feel unable to confront. On reflection, I would have preferred "Route to social equality or educational dead-end?" to avoid any allusion to a monster. In either case, I had moved on from perceiving alternative

Conversation with Sophia at the seaside **(Representing findings)**

Feeling I have binned more drafts than I have written, I called Sophia early this morning asking if we could meet today to discuss representation of my research findings. We agreed to meet on the pebbled beach close to her home, determined not to be put off by the grim weather. I arrived early and have been sitting on this rock facing the open sea and trying to gather my thoughts, ignoring the cold wind slapping my hair against my face and the occasional splash from waves that come crashing at the bottom of this rock. I just sit. And think. And wait.

"Morning!" she startles me; I did not hear her coming.

"Hi!" I greet Sophia with a smile. "Thank you for coming at such short notice."

We have to speak up to be heard over the howling wind and the crashing waves. I jump off the rock and pick up my rucksack. There is nobody else in sight as we start slowly treading the pebbles across the length of the beach. As ever, each leisurely step displaces a handful of pebbles yet the landscape appears unaffected.

"You haven't called me to discuss pebbles, I hope" she shouts against the wind, noticing my gaze.

"No, no. That was just my thoughts going off on a tangent." I shout back. "I wanted to talk about how research looks on paper." I shout the last word even louder, as another wave comes crashing towards us.

"Neat and tidy, usually" she calls as she leaps back to catch her hat, temporarily claimed by the wind.

"That is what bothers me; it all gets fragmented." If it were not for the howling wind necessitating such a laconic dialogue I would have expanded on my double discomfort: unease at fragmentation and concern that attempting a rational description of parts may inadvertently imply the existence of a rational whole and invite expectations of theorising a collective perspective. I might have even mentioned Gary Thomas prompting such thoughts by writing about the "myth of rational research", holding researchers responsible for imposing order on lived experience and claiming there to be "no reason to assume that some shadowy organisation (...) underpins people's thought or behaviour in any of the social phenomena in which educational researchers are interested" (Thomas, 1998: 145).

"But can you see an alternative?" A second roll of thunder warns us of an approaching thunderstorm; we carry on.

It takes me a while to respond to Sophia's question. Can I see an alternative? How can one write with clarity about a number of interconnected issues, other than by addressing one issue at a time? Then again, how does one delineate interrelated issues? Understanding a call for 'adequate support' for disabled children in mainstream schools has as much to do with staff training, experience and expectations as it has to do with the current statementing framework and central role of Learning Support Assistants, all of which is connected to

funding, which in turn is tied to politics, while all of the above may be coloured by individual perspectives on disability. Short of writing on overhead transparencies and superimposing them on one another, no I cannot.

"No, I don't think I can." I call back eventually. With another crack of thunder the sky begins to cry at my lack of alternatives: thick, heavy raindrops begin to fall and soon the sound of pouring rain adds to the noise of the wind and the waves. Sophia and I carry on regardless.

"Can't you at least write about your reservations?" she calls out, trying to keep her scarf end over her shoulder.

"And what good would that do?" I call back trying to push wet hair off my face. "I want readers to engage with this frustration, not just read about it." I would love to tell her more about this. Each participant has brought to this research their personal experiences as well as their unique way of making sense of these. If what I have accessed is an intricate web of interlocked and interconnected issues but can only address a small fragment at a time, my representation will fail participants unless readers attempt to reconnect the fragments in their own minds. Not unlike showing something under a microscope expecting viewers to generate a mental image of the whole, with the added complication that the whole here is not a solid construct. If this were an amorphous cluster of shifting colourful dots, similar to the static clusters in colour-blindness tests, and I could use coloured overlays to focus on particular colours or shades, this may not have felt so frustrating.

"Do you mind if we head back?" Sophia shouts over the noise of the sea and the storm, *"We are both getting soaked and I don't think I can help you."*

"You've already helped a lot," I call back with a smile, "thanks." During the brisk walk back we confirm our next meeting, to finish the patchwork quilt we have been making. We both belong to a collaborative writing group at the Graduate School of Education, where there has been much talk about patchwork quilting and hope of one day publishing our work. Sophia and I have borrowed the idea and have been making our own quilt. As she leaves, I remember to prompt her about the picture I have not managed to get permission to reprint. I want her to have a look at this before we talk about it again. "Do a web search on Google Images" I call to her. "Search for 'Napoleon illusion' and look for the picture with the trees by the sea and Napoleon's tomb on the right."

After Sophia has gone I walk back towards the rock, taking stock of my thoughts. The prospect of dismantling complex issues for linear reporting disturbs me; the possibility that readers may not reconnect these (or, worse still, may connect them assuming an underlying rational structure) leaves an even more sour taste in my mouth; I want readers to taste this. My position of discomfort declared, I take off and wring out my gloves, then climb back on the rock, pull some paper out of my rucksack and start writing.

Qualitative phase findings

Text boxes in this section have blue borders for narrating the story of this research, red borders for introducing subsections, 'people' borders for quotes from relevant literature, speech bubbles for quotes from participants and this border for my comments and reflections.

All names of schools, staff and children quoted in these pages are pseudonyms. To further protect participants' anonymity, I have used 'senior teacher' instead of specifying the role of Headteacher, Deputy Head or SENCo.

In re-presenting perspectives of mainstream school staff, I shall first address content and then form. With regard to content, first I wish to explore participants' reasons for supporting inclusion. Every member of staff that was interviewed expressed support for inclusion in principle, typically unprompted, during the course of our conversation. Keen to understand participants' rationale for upholding inclusion in principle, I paid particular attention to how and where they attributed benefits of inclusion.

"Complexity is the hallmark of the questions that are asked about education. This is particularly the case with inclusion in education. It is the expectation that it will be possible to reduce those questions to simple propositions stripped of political, subjective or other unwelcome elements that leads to the notion that discourse about inclusion is in some way ideological. And it is the assumption that this *can* be done - that one *can* be objective and apolitical in these matters - which leads those who make such claims to assume that their own thinking is not infected by the ideology impostor."

(Thomas & Glenny, 2002: 349, emphasis original)

I would like to introduce at this stage the concept of kaleidoscopic understanding: our ability to appraise a position *in relation to the standpoint from which it is being held.* Through kaleidoscopic understanding I would, for example, acknowledge spiritual beliefs associated with a religion I do not subscribe to, rather than rejecting them for appearing unsound when examined from my personal standpoint. In education, as in any other context, two people may be looking at the same events and drawing different conclusions. I consider this similar to looking through a kaleidoscope from different angles and suggest it would be constructive to respect and engage with each other's conclusions, as though attempting to find which angle of the kaleidoscope would yield that picture. If you have read 'Literacy Session at Mara Santime Infant School' (pages 61-65) you have probably used kaleidoscopic understanding by engaging with each character's standpoint. The plea to recognize and respect an alternative point of view is far from original. My contribution, if any, lies not in the creation of a new concept but in coining the term and proposing its application when appraising inclusive education.

Kathleen Nolan, writing on ways which could render academic texts on educational research accessible to wider audiences, uses the kaleidoscope metaphor to advocate creative use of colour and layout in academic writing and refers to ensuing texts as 'kaleidoscopic' and 'performative'.

(Nolan, 2005: 120-121)

Liz Stanley, referring to the process of writing a biography, contrasts the microscope metaphor ("the more information about the subject you collect, the closer to 'the truth' - the 'whole picture' - you get") with that of a kaleidoscope ("each time you look you see something rather different, composed certainly of the same elements, but in a new configuration.")

(Stanley, 1992: 158)

Most participants, at least[1] seventeen teaching and support staff from both schools, cited benefits for the non-disabled children in the school, mostly seeing inclusion as an enriching experience for them. This was often put forward as the primary reason for supporting inclusion in principle. For example:

[1]I am unable to provide accurate numbers as some of the interviews conducted were not recorded.

And it was a really wonderful experience because we felt that aside from the boy you know being in mainstream and having the advantage of that, we felt that the other 29 children in the class had a real positive benefit of being with him. And that they actually were a lot more tolerant than they might well have been. We felt that as a unit the class were a lot stronger and the empathy that was developed amongst the children was absolutely fantastic and it was something to be really proud of.

Mike (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

And again it's good for the other children because to see children like that and get used to them because, you know, they are all members of society, so they've got to learn.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Mary (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I think children learn to be more tolerant, to be more understanding.

And I do think it's wonderful for those children. And I think it's wonderful for the other children in the class. Because we've seen how the other children react to a Down's syndrome child. How loving and how caring they are of the child. (...) But the way that the children have reacted to children with needs has been absolutely marvellous. Really wonderful. And it's good for them to be around children who do have needs. You know, show that concern and care and look after them. I think it's a wonderful thing.

Irene (senior teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I think as long as all the right backup facilities are there, and support facilities are there, you know obviously unless there are really severe difficulties, I still think inclusion is probably right. I mean I wouldn't like to go back to the days where as soon as you showed slightly being out of the sort of normal run-of-the-mill person, that you were put into a special school and were segregated away from the society. So I don't think that's right either. Because it's important for the children and the staff to realise that there is a range of people.

At least four teachers expressed the view that non-disabled children would benefit from experiencing diversity, but explicitly questioned whether the disabled child would benefit from a mainstream placement, on the grounds of limited resources and expertise available. One teacher questioned the moral value of depriving a child of appropriate provision in the name of offering an enriching experience to their peers. (A transcript of this interview is not available.)

If you do get the support then I think it is a very good idea, but I think sometimes when you don't get the full support that you need or like Hassib[2] with equipment, you know I'm not quite sure how much he is benefiting. The school is benefiting from having him in, and the... normal children are benefiting, because they are seeing life in a different perspective and appreciating somebody like that that they might bump into in the streets or... so they've got that appreciation for it. But I'm not quite sure how much... like I say in the early years I think they do, because they are socialising and that sort of thing but I think as it goes through the school, and maybe their learning disabilities stand out more because they get further and further behind, I am not quite sure sometimes how much some individual children actually gain from that.

[2]A pupil with visual impairment

Fran (teacher, 10 yrs experience)

Two participants mentioned specific benefits for staff. Helen, a teacher with 17 years experience, mentioned the advantage of an additional pair of hands in the classroom and Caroline, a Learning Support Assistant in her first year at school, referred to knowledge and experience gained as a benefit to staff.

I believe meaning can be found as much in the actual words used as in the standpoint from which they are uttered. For example, an expression of love for children would attract different interpretations if voiced by a parent or a paedophile. Kaleidoscopic understanding is called for. Similarly, what is considered to be advantageous for a disabled child would depend on one's perception of disability: benefits to a disabled child expressed from a discourse of deficit are likely to focus on interventions or conditions helpful in managing, if not ameliorating, the child's impairment; expressed from a discourse of equality, benefits are most likely to consist of opportunities for the child to become a valued member of his or her community. This distinction may not appear meaningful to those who are immersed in the medical model of disability. (Please see page 40 for information on the medical and social models of disability.)

Thirteen participants cited advantages for the disabled child being included in a mainstream school. Eight of these appeared to be speaking from a discourse of deficit; they mostly referred to the enriching experience of being exposed to 'normality' and/or positive role models and, more often than not, did so in passing. For example:

> Because I know another child I had years and years ago that did actually stay in mainstream school until- I think it was halfway through the juniors, and then actually moved on to a special school. And that sort of benefited him at the time. But then from special school point of view, somebody who's more (slight pause) on the normal scale and is benefiting from mixing with the more able children and then that's got to be good, doesn't it, because they could regress by going to a special school and seeing behaviour that is not suitable there.
>
> Fran (teacher, 10 yrs experience)

> Because I think it's quite important that children are able to be in with their own peer group and to see sort of, (pause) it's awful to say 'normal' kind of society but I can't think of another word to say it.
>
> Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

> And, you know, having children in school that aren't, different, who aren't, who don't find life as easy I think actually is beneficial for all because it is beneficial for them because they are obviously fitting into possibly a better provision than they might have, but I think it also encourages children to see that life is not the same for everybody and life is not as easy for everybody and therefore it makes them more sympathetic and, you know, it makes them think more deeply.
>
> Mike (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

The remaining five appeared to be speaking from a discourse of equality; they mentioned, or alluded to, moral reasons for supporting inclusion along the lines of human rights and emotional benefits for children feeling included. One teacher took time at the beginning of her interview to explain her strong support for inclusion in principle.

Artemi: Can I just push you a little bit on this first thing you said? You said that you agree with that in principle. You might think I am asking you to state the obvious, but why? Why are we saying that this is a good thing?

Miriam: Because of the social skills… because of all the things that being in the school can give to a child. I still feel that, regardless of how they react or their different little problems, that they should still be open to the same influences that every other child has. So that when they are older they don't think "well, actually, I just remember being somewhere all on my own and of there was nobody there"

Artemi: So is it a matter of equality?

Miriam: Yes, and I know children don't remember that much but all about a feeling, perhaps it's just a feeling that they might have, that actually they were in a school and there was lots going on, and they might remember different things that happen… Christmas activities, I just think that it's more… perhaps not about remembering but perhaps that feeling that you were included really.

Miriam (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

I think socially it's a good idea. I think for the kind of world as a whole, we're all important. Whatever. You know everybody. And I think if we're not truly inclusive then what we're doing is building barriers and saying these people aren't as worthy as us. To some extent. I think we should try to be inclusive and all try and get on. (…) And I think that's important because it's so easy to just think that you've got to get on and you've got to be brilliant and you've got to be this that and everything else as the media so often portrays everybody as tall slim and beautiful and highly intelligent and it shouldn't be like that. It should be everybody. And I think the more inclusivity you get at a young age, that they grow up with that and they see that as the norm and how it should be.

Isabelle (teacher, 3 yrs experience)

One teacher, who did not seem to engage with our topic of conversation, referred to a visually impaired child in school but stopped short of offering any reasons for supporting his presence. Towards the end of our conversation I returned to seeking her rationale for supporting inclusion.

I mean it's lovely that he can be there, because (pause) But practically it's really hard.

Celia (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: What about pros and cons of a mainstream placement?
Celia: Um… Well just as I've said already really (pause)
Artemi: We've talked about some of the concerns about how things turn out in practice about support and training, but what would be the benefits, I mean why
Celia: Well it's nice for the other children as well to see people that are different and accept them into their community and that is lovely really for them to have that opportunity for them. But the *other* children (pause)
Artemi: So some sort of enriching for them but from a different point of view?
Celia: Yeah, that's great. And for the child to mix with them. So, as long as it works and if that's practical, but… is it really? I don't know.

I have often wondered what Celia referred to as "great". Hearing her views expressed in words consistent with the dominant discourse? Considering the question answered? Something entirely different?

One participant spoke of her initial reservations to inclusion in principle, later adding that many years of experience have allayed her early apprehension.

When it first started happening, I was quite against it for myself. Because, you know when you train to be a teacher, you can choose. Well, when I was trained you chose whether you wanted to go into mainstream schooling or special needs. And at that time, I never had any special needs training whatsoever. You know I was just mainstream and that was it. And all my teaching practices were in mainstream schools. And so I wasn't taught, there wasn't even a crash course. There was nothing, our syllabus didn't touch at all on special needs. So I knew nothing about them at all. And that was my choice.

Irene (senior teacher, 17 yrs experience)

"The evidence seems to indicate that teachers' negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation such as inclusive education may change over time as a function of experience and the expertise that develops through the process of implementation."

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002: 134)

"Amidst the myriad problems cited by teachers [with regard to inclusion] there were many positives. Those cited by teachers were:

- Social benefits to children and young people from being more accepted by their peers and by adults
- Social benefits to children and young people who come to a better understanding and acceptance of people with special needs
- A broader professional awareness of diversity of needs and learning difficulties
- Enhancement of teachers' and LSAs' repertoire of skills in dealing with a diversity of special needs

Parental satisfaction from feeling their children are being educated within the community alongside their neighbours' children"

(MacBeath et al, 2006: 41)

Standpoints for supporting inclusion:

Enrichment?

Equality?

Charity?

Necessity?

Other?

Combined standpoints?

….the other 29 children in the class had a real positive benefit of being with him...

...if we're not truly inclusive then what we're doing is building barriers and saying these people aren't as worthy as us...

And it's good for them to be around children who do have needs. You know, show that concern and care and look after them.

So, as long as it works and if that's practical, but... is it really? I don't know.

I now turn to participants' strength of support for inclusion. One observation became apparent very early during the interviewing process: expressions of support for inclusion in principle tended to be accompanied by provisos and/or prerequisites, typically expressed with stipulations such as 'but only if' or 'as long as'. I created a separate coding category for such utterances, the only category to include multiple extracts from all recorded interviews, and considered them carefully.

The most genuine expression of support for an idea in principle may reveal little, if anything, of the strength or extent of this support. For example, an elderly gentleman and a 'Fathers-for-Justice' activist[3] may both express support for the importance of fathers' contribution to children's lives.

[3]'Fathers-for-Justice' is a civil rights group campaigning for changes in family law to safeguard parenting rights of divorced fathers. It has staged a number of eye-catching protests over the past few years, including one protester climbing up to a Buckingham Palace balcony in 'Batman' costume.

"As identified at an early stage of this research, despite a commitment to inclusion, many mainstream teachers are experiencing anxieties, difficulties and concerns in embedding inclusive values in their day-to-day practices."
(Zelaieta, 2004: 39)

'The needs of the child'[4] were mentioned by all but one participant as a key consideration in determining type of provision. For most this meant that they would support inclusion as long as the child "can cope in mainstream" and his/ her presence does not disrupt the education of their peers. One teacher spoke of the difficulties of being called upon to cater for a medical need.

[4]Please see pages 36 & 230-239 for a discussion of 'the needs of the child' as a social construct.

So I've got mixed views really. Talking about children with quite severe needs, I just can't see how we could- how they would get everything they needed in a school like this. You know, an ancient building with very cramped classrooms with 30 kids. I don't know, nothing is set up somehow.

Trevor (teacher, 6 yrs experience)

I mean with one case of a little girl, all her statement has come out as, I think it's about one and a half hours a day. She has a physical need. Which is not, she more or less needs somebody on call all of the time, just in case she needs some kind of help. And the physical need is a procedure that needs to be carried out by a trained person. And I certainly would not, it's a medical procedure and I don't think I can do it. I haven't been trained to do it. The Head has said that she is not prepared to do it. It's an extremely intimate procedure and, you know, the LSAs have all said no they're not prepared to do it. So we're sort of stuck there.

Irene (senior teacher, 17 yrs experience)

I am about to bring participants in conversation with relevant literature and then with one another. Although this may give the impression that I wish to contest their sayings, such antagonism could not be further from my aim. My commitment to kaleidoscopic understanding dictates that I should render alternative standpoints explicit. In doing so, I find myself all the more impressed, if not awed, by the efforts made by mainstream school staff to accommodate some children, precisely because from their own standpoint such efforts may well have appeared unwarranted.

Caroline: We have a child coming up next year with autism. And he came to visit the other day and he ignored all the other children, and didn't acknowledge that anybody else [unclear: was here (?)] So he is applying for a statement and we are on about this, saying with the one-to-one, will he actually adapt to it? If not, this is where he would have to go to a special school. Because he will get in the way, not as in such in the way but… [other children won't be educated to

Artemi: [It will disrupt…

Caroline: Well yeah, if that's the case then he would have to go to a special school. Because he ignored the nursery nurse outside when she went to say hello, and if that happens it wouldn't work as such.

Caroline (LSA, first year in school)

Responding to question on what type of school she attended:

"Right. Mainstream school. What do you do with a child of school age who has got no speech and that wonderful thing called challenging behaviour? The Local Authority says put them in a special needs school. My parents said no, her academic needs will get met in a mainstream school. (…) My parents had a jolly hard fight and they lost that fight. So they had no other option but to turn to the private system. (…) I didn't have learning disabilities, I had autism and autism doesn't need to see autism."

(Blackburn, 1998: 81-83)

I had a v- quite an autistic child in my classroom who found it very difficult to integrate into the classroom. Mainly because they can't cope with a situation where it's noisy, where there is bright things on the wall, and really that a mainstream school was just the wrong setting for her.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Donna Williams, writing of her experience of growing up with autism, shares her meaning behind gestures typically associated with autistic children , including:

"*Rocking, hand-shaking, head-banging, flicking objects, chin-tapping*

Provides security and release, and thereby decreases built-up inner anxiety and tension, thereby decreasing fear. The more extreme the movement, the greater the feeling I was trying to combat."

She later offers hints to facilitate communication, including: "The best way I could have been able to listen to someone was for them to speak to themselves about me out loud (…) In doing so indirect contact, such as looking out of a window whilst talking, would have been best."

(Williams, 1999: 183-6)

Throughout this thesis, some of the quotes I have chosen to present may evoke strong feelings. I would urge you, the reader, not to be critical of the people whose voice is represented: all quotes are reproduced outside the context of time, place and audience in which they were generated, while many constitute a looking-glass into events of yet another chronotope[5]. Moreover, not everyone has had sufficient opportunity to engage with philosophical issues, while some practitioners may have come up against inflexible structures themselves, as they sought to accommodate disabled pupils.

[5]A term appropriated by Bakhtin to signify a unified context of time and space. Emerson and Holquist define the chronotope as "an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring." (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981: 425-6)

But as a child gets older, the gap widens, to an extent. If you've got somebody who's got very special educational needs, I don't think I would want to put a child of mine in a situation where they might lose self-esteem. For whatever reason. On the other hand I have to say that... it depends on the difficulty, doesn't it? Because, you know, there would be nothing worse than putting a child into a specialist situation where, if that was the only option that was there, he or she was with a group of children where their needs were sort of very different, or very much worse. I mean, you know, that would be like being sort of trapped in a comatose situation and not being able to tell anybody that you were still alive! I mean, you know, that would be terrible, wouldn't it?

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)*

Artemi: Is there an example that you can think of, has this situation arisen, when somebody applied and you felt that their needs were too great for you to admit them?

Mary: Yes. Well, I don't think she opted to come in the end, but there was a little girl who had a feeding tube. I can't remember the technical details, but she had to be fed by tube and they said they needed a sterile area. And we thought we really couldn't provide, we couldn't guarantee that we could provide a sterile area for her and keep all the equipment that was needed. We were concerned about that. But in the end I think she has opted to go to a special school. Because I think apart from the feeding, she would be able to join in and be part of the school. It was a sort of physical thing that we couldn't provide the space and the area.

Mary (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)*

*Jessica and Mary work in different schools

Many participants expressed their understanding of how different types of need should call for different types of provision; for example, at least six members of staff from both schools said that a mainstream placement is unlikely to be appropriate for a child who has autism, on the grounds of an overstimulating environment, and one teacher thought inclusion is inappropriate for deaf children, on the grounds of their apparent inability to grasp new concepts in an oralist environment. Most teachers spoke of inclusion as "possible" or "not a problem" for children with sensory impairments, mild physical impairments or learning difficulties, on the understanding that an LSA would be available to differentiate and deliver the curriculum according to the child's needs. Severe physical or medical needs and behavioural difficulties were often cited as examples of when inclusion would be inappropriate.

I've only ever taught one child in mainstream who I think would have probably been better off from his own point of view in a special setting. And in fact he did leave the infant school at the end of year two and went into a junior school in a hearing unit of a special school. Because he was very deaf, profoundly deaf.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Isabelle: Well if it was a perfect word, I think children with all types of needs should be together. As much as they can, I mean obviously there is going to be severe needs which make it almost impossible and which would probably not help the child.

Artemi: Like?

Isabelle: (Pause)

Artemi: Just so that I understand what's in your mind.

Isabelle: Yeah I'm just thinking of… I mean children with… (pause) I can't really think. Just sort of so severe that they would need lots of medical attention really. (…)

Artemi: OK. So very severe physical needs

Isabelle: Yeah I think so. And again I think it's what, if it was severe behaviour problems where it would become unsafe for other children. And I think then you'd have to say no.

Isabelle (teacher, 3 yrs experience)

I've got a child who's got [names and explains a medical condition which affects movement], and he can integrate without any problems. You've just got to make a few special adaptions. You know he's got to have special adaptations, sit on a (inaudible) cushion, special pencils that are more chunky for him to hold, which that sort of disability you can integrate in the mainstream without too many problems. But I think perhaps when you've got a very autistic child, it just doesn't work. (…) You know, it depends on, like you say, this particular child I don't think parents should have that right to send [her] here when she is disrupting others' education so much. But if it's a child who is, say, deaf that can be supported by an LSA and perhaps sign language then that's fine, that's not going to disrupt the other children.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

If they were disruptive to the rest of the children, I would rather them *not* be here! (laughs)

Reviewing responses to questionnaires I noted that 25 participants from 17 schools had hand-written comments about question one. 16 of these were to the effect that choice of school would depend on the needs of the child (for example: "depends on disability", "this entirely depends on the severity of individual need" and "I feel there are cases where children with extreme physical disability need to be in a special school.") 5 others commented on the need for resources and 4 on terminology.

"Teachers are more willing to include students with mild disabilities or physical/sensory impairments than students with more complex needs. In particular, there is enough evidence to suggest that, in the case of more severe learning needs and behavioural difficulties, teachers hold negative attitudes to the implementation of inclusion."

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002: 142)

[T]here is a marked hierarchy of tolerance [which] ranges from the most positive attitudes towards children with (certain forms of) physical disability, to high resistance to children with EBD.

(Clough, 1998: 12)

For most, if not all participants, level of support was an important prerequisite for supporting inclusion. Typically such comments related to funding being available for another adult to support the child's learning; the quality of such support was mentioned less frequently. For example:

I think as far as school is concerned, because I think inclusion is good for society I think it's good to have inclusion at school, but I think within that, there's problems. There's things that need to be there. So if you're going to be truly inclusive, I think you have to think about your staffing, ratios to children, and I think it's really got to be looked at properly, resources, has got to be looked at properly, and it all comes down to money. And I think what happens is you don't get enough staffing, you don't get enough resources, you don't get enough money, and also within that staffing I think you need professional development. So that people get correct training so that they fully understand what they need to do.

Isabelle (teacher, 3 yrs experience)

"Positive attitudes to inclusive education are directly linked to the resources which are attached to policies. These attitudes 'shrink' in keeping with diminishing resources."

(Clough, 1998: 12)

It very much depends on the disability and the statement. But I think I would go for inclusion as long as it is properly provided for and appropriate arrangements are made for the right sort of help and assistance for the child.

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Artemi: Now when we started talking, probably before I even switched this thing on, we said something about pros and cons, or you said something about there's issues for and issues against, so is this a good point to revisit that statement?

Karen: I think inclusion is great, I think it is brilliant, but you need the support. As a teacher I need the support.

Karen (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: I mean it's definitely a national and local policy to include more children with statements in mainstream schools, and it is happening here as well. Did you have any thoughts on whether that's a good thing or a bad thing or a bit in the middle?

Helen: I don't think- the increase has been fairly recent, hasn't it? So these children haven't actually worked their way through the school yet. And I don't know. I mean if they come with support, then I'm sure it's absolutely fine, but... It's if the support is not there is the problem so it all probably boils down to finance, doesn't it? If they're fully supported, then it's not a problem.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

I think basically most teachers would think that inclusion is a good thing, as long as there are support systems in place to enable the teacher to carry on.

I think that children with disabilities are part of the world and that it's important we see them in the classroom and we work with them and they work with other children and I think it benefits all the children *if* it's done properly. And what I really disagree with is that I think sometimes it's done and it's just done on the cheap as it were. And I think sometimes it's not enough provision for these children to be in my classroom and to be accessing the curriculum and gaining from it. Because I do think that you do need a lot of support.

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

And as I just said really if you've got good quality people working with them and if the statement is sufficient to meet their needs, which is not always the case, but in year one for example where there's two children with a statement in a class you actually employ somebody all day and you can fiddle it around like that. If you've got the sort of freedom to provide that, then I think it actually works OK.

Mike (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

"School staff frequently referred to inclusion being 'on the cheap' as schools lacked the resources to attract quality experienced staff with the relevant balance of expertise." (MacBeath et al, 2006: 24)

At least four participants mentioned the age of the child as significant, suggesting that inclusion can be more appropriate for younger children for reasons of curriculum content and reactions of other children. For example:

We dealt with him really well in reception we felt, he had a statement when he came in so we coped with him very well in reception, it was more difficult in year one. And it was blimming difficult in year two. And we actually felt that he would not survive in the junior school. And Mum felt that very strongly.

Mike (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Well this child was a very bright child and in the early years of his education he was absolutely fine in mainstream. (…) But I had him in year two and he started year two OK. But as year two went on, and as the content of the syllabus became more concept based, he struggled more and more and more and more. And I really felt by the end of year two that it would have been a huge disadvantage for him to carry on even with support. And we spent a long time agonising over it but eventually his parents decided that they would like him to go to a special unit for the hearing-impaired.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Penny: I mean in infants they are all quite innocent but when she gets into like the junior school, they're not quite so innocent over there. So, you know they are looked upon as being different. You know, even though we've done all our PHSE and tried to set, you know integrate them and all that, children when they get to that age are not so accommodating.

Artemi: And you say that because you've seen it happen or because you know it would happen?

Penny: I think probably it would happen when you get over to the juniors, yeah.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

A recent study into experiences of boys and girls aged 10-11 and 13-14 with statements of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties reports: "A notable emergent theme from the study was the high incidence of 'bullying' that was experienced. Though experienced in both settings, those in special schools experienced far more 'bullying' from children in other mainstream schools and from peers and outsiders in their neighbourhood."

(Norwich & Kelly, 2004: 43)

At least two participants specifically mentioned that they support inclusion in principle but oppose the way it is currently being implemented. For example:

You know the fact that you don't actually have to be very cynical to work out that maybe a lot of this is about saving money. Closing down institutions, getting rid of staff. Whose best interests are actually at heart? Is it the best interest of the children or is it about saving money? So, having said all of that, I mean there are children that we have in the school that have fitted in very well and it does work well with them. You know by instinct I'm an inclusive person! But what I cannot stand is inclusion just being used as a thing to put children in there without the resources, without the proper backup, without seriously listening to what people are saying and then taking their views seriously

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

Well it's one of those issues that is very hard to be kind of, you can't in a way be against it, but on the other hand, it doesn't really work for some children. And I have had direct experience of children who are failed by the school. That our school has not met their needs. And it has been distressing for the child and for myself and for the child's parents and for other children.

Looking back to survey responses, I find it noteworthy that participants expressed reservations to inclusion more openly and more fervently through an anonymous questionnaire than during face-to-face interviews.

Most participants alluded to their support for special schools through their conditional support for inclusion. Some specifically referred to special schools to voice or justify their commendation for these environments. For example:

I have very mixed views really, because the school I worked in was just fantastic. All those children's needs were catered for, on site there were occupational therapists, and speech therapists, and physios, and we had these guys who do- do you know the Peto thing from Hungary? So we had a couple of Hungarians there and they were doing that as well. And everybody worked together, and then people had their own care workers as well. So their average day was really mixed and varied; it was with trained professionals getting really expert help. So I saw that- You know, that's not something that would happen in this school for instance.

Trevor (teacher, 6 yrs experience)

Artemi: So you started off by saying that you've got mixed feelings. So I wonder if you would tell me a bit more about that?

Trevor: Well I suppose it comes down to that... You know I think each child deserves the best education that they can have, and I think special schools are really, you know the ones that I've been to have been fantastic. They've been really geared up for that. But I do think that there is a lot of prejudice and ignorance around the whole issue. And particularly as these kids grow up, because in the beginning it's "ah, cute", and you get a big 15-year-old, and it's not seen as quite so cute. So I think there is a huge issue about- social issues about how people are viewed and accepted.

And I do have, this is outside of the school, but I have a friend whose daughter is profoundly deaf. And had enormous problems with their Local Education Authority, about getting their daughter properly looked after at school. Because they kept on banging on about inclusion and this girl had been in her primary school, she was deaf since birth, but then she pointed out you know, she has never been invited to a birthday party of any other child in the class. Now tell me how is that inclusive for her? (...) So to me, I mean that was an example of how, this is a parent with a child who has been in a mainstream school so-called inclusive, was thoroughly excluded by the process, was victimised by the Local Authority for trying to get the best thing for her child and had to go through the courts, enormously stressful, won, and her child is now happy because they're not in an inclusive setting!

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

Because I think there is still a need for specialist placements. For certain children.

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Celia (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: What would the special school offer? Why might we choose that?

Celia: Just more... more time and... special attention to what they actually need. Focused on what their needs were really. It's difficult, I really don't know.

Artemi: It's hard, isn't it?

Celia: Yeah. I don't know what I think really. All right?

Artemi: That's fine, that's fine. Can I just ask you, do you have experience of special schools yourself or are you talking from [having visited-

Celia: [No, I've never been to one.

Aware that I might be accessing improvised responses, nonetheless valuing these as additional means for understanding limitations to participants' support for inclusion in principle, I asked staff how they might structure provision for all children if they had an opportunity.

More than half of all staff interviewed described, or rather alluded to, a system that would maintain a range of provision; children would be offered a placement according to their needs. The possibility of a special school placement, an evident option within this model, was not once mentioned. Rose, a teacher with 14 years experience, outlined how placement of individual children would be decided on the basis of each child's needs, their parents' wishes and the provision a particular setting can offer; Julia, a teacher with 15 years experience, included additional considerations of distance from home and needs of siblings. I do not have a transcript of either of these interviews. At least three participants advocated the possibility of split placements.

Artemi: So if we come back from our ideal world and come back to this world. But if we still had the remit to restructure provision, if you and I were the Authority providing for all the children, what might we want to put into place? I mean we couldn't change things overnight, but what might be the first step that we'd want to take?

Jessica: To make things better? (Long pause) Well, I think I would have to say, the LSA support. And then perhaps for some children a split placement might be an ideal thing. (…)

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

So, you know often it might be, it would be good if they could have some sort of split placement or... (long pause) go... (pause) well I suppose it would have to be a split placement but if there is not any other facilities available to do that, I don't know what we'd do really.

Artemi: That sounds very interesting. So could we go back to this idea of becoming the LEA briefly, and enjoy our moment of authority (laughs). How would we plan then, making sure that provision is available for children who need it?

Penny: Yes. Now, again it's not only like the Ed Psych and physiotherapists. It's also your building. Because some places are just not ideally suited for children with disabilities. You know, it depends on what their disabilities are, but you can see here how could we cope with somebody in a wheelchair? (Laughs) You know…

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

The difference between proposed and existing model seems to be distilled in the amount of pressure on schools to admit a child when staff feel they cannot cater for his or her needs. I believe kaleidoscopic understanding is called for: from a standpoint which privileges access to a perceived tailor-made environment over right to belong to one's local community, such pressure must seem ludicrous. It is perhaps the extent of one's support for inclusion in principle, which determines whether in practice one asks "can we?" or "how can we?"

At least five staff offered suggestions for developing current mainstream provision; these included calls for strategic planning, investing in physical and human resources and reducing class sizes.

A couple of years ago my problem child (laughs) problem child that I had, he sometimes would go off on one and he just needed to have 10 minutes out of the classroom, on his own, one-to-one with someone else, and luckily we had an LSA in the school who was working with groups, working in a classroom and I'd just send a little card to her saying "please come and take [this child] out for 10 minutes" and she'd arrive she'd take him out for 10 minutes and he'd arrive back in the classroom, calm, placid and lovely. You know, it is possible within the school to be able to do something like that. (...) You know, even if it was [the Headteacher], I'm sure he would quite happily walk a child around the playground with a temper tantrum having that kind of problem. It wouldn't be an issue at all.

Karen (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Denise: I have to say, probably that's the way forward, isn't it? Because a small class, you can deal with anything in a small class can't you?

Artemi: It would be a different ball game, wouldn't it?

Denise: Oh, completely different. I think 28 in the class is far too many anyway. At this age.

I think every classroom should have a teacher plus an LSA full-time. I think would be better. Better ratio for children. I think it would be even better if you had less children and still had two. (laughs)

Isabelle (teacher, 3 yrs experience)

It's quite difficult to think of a different system when you already work in one.

Mary: Well you would need purpose-built schools with plenty of small rooms for therapy and for medical needs. And you'd need room for storing equipment, and you'd have to have more training for teachers. Because until recently teachers had just been trained for mainstream children and so have had very little experience of dealing with physical disabilities. So, you'd need more training. More resources, more room, and more money!

Artemi: And, I know this is off-the-cuff, but would we be equipping every school and every teacher in that way?

Mary: Well, I think the Authority's policy is to do it on an area basis.

Artemi: Yes but we are redesigning policy. What would *we* want to?

Mary: Yeah, because I haven't found out which school it is in our area! (Both laugh) They're not saying either! So, yes I think if you're realistic, yeah, you'd have to do it on an area basis. But then it almost, that's sort of saying you're almost creating special schools then, aren't you?

Artemi: That's the dilemma, isn't it?

Mary: In the ideal world, I'd say no, it should be every school. If I'm having my wish list on this, because then the children could just go to their local school. You know, for children that live on their road. And that's how it should be.

Mary (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Although all the above proposals involve restructuring current mainstream provision, a more careful reading suggests the absence of a shared rationale. Some proposals seem to be fuelled more by a desire to develop provision for disabled children, while others by a desire to reduce pressure on individual members of staff. Such perspectives may be separated by only a fine line, if at all, but I believe they may grow out of a variety of motives and are therefore worth exploring.

At least four participants advocated developing resource bases, for disabled children to benefit from both a tailor-made environment and social contact with their peers.

Tom: I think the way forward is what I saw [abroad] actually. (...) and what I saw there I thought was inclusion. And they have children who have to come in special ambulances, they're terribly physically disabled; children are blind, deaf, all sorts of problems, and there is a whole floor of this school, you know it's a big big school,

Artemi: Are we talking special school or mainstream school?

Tom: No mainstream school, goes from 6 to 16. And they have a whole floor of the school which is for these children. And, you know, with special ramps in and it's got like sensory floors, and it's got all kinds of equipment, that you sit here thinking this is rid- we've got nothing like that here. And the children are included in that they go into school meals together and they go into the playground together with their carers, they go into some lessons but not other lessons etc etc. So it is kind of like the facilities for their needs are on the site, in the building, so the children are not hidden away in some other place. And the children know each other but they have separate lessons for certain things, within the building.

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

Yeah I think, but then, it would be nice to be able to say to the kids "Look you can be in a mainstream school but the support network is there or you can be in a special school and go out to a mainstream school". You know the things that the others have been saying about [the school abroad], about having the special needs unit attached, and they were integrated completely into the normal day, and they got the support when they needed it, and... Fantastic.

Karen (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

It would seem naïve to assume that staff never spoke to one another about this project or about their interviews with me. Karen's words on the previous page, referring to "the things that the others have been saying", have given me the strongest indication that at least some participants discussed these issues among themselves. Far from seeing such potential interactions as a hindrance, tainting supposedly 'pure' perspectives, I see them as positive contributions to this study, by affording participants additional opportunities to explore their thinking. After all, I believe we all develop our ideological positions largely through interaction, indeed dialogue, with others.

"Internally persuasive discourse – as opposed to one that is externally authoritative – is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "one's own word."* In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses. Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is *not finite*, it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*."

*One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible.

(Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981: 345-6, emphasis original)

Extent of support for inclusion:

Only for children who can easily fit in?

Unconditional support?

Only if managed well?

Only if implemented by someone else?

Other limitations?

If they're fully supported, then it's not a problem.

So if you're going to be truly inclusive, I think you have to think about your staffing, ratios to children, (…) resources, (…) and it all comes down to money.

I now turn to participants' reservations about inclusion in practice. Not unlike flames of a raging fire, these are numerous and interconnected, rendering their representation problematic. Following repeated reading and coding of interview transcripts, I identified seven main, albeit overlapping, clusters of concern: funding, human resources, training, LEA support, physical resources, pressure on teachers and strategic planning. Over the next few pages I present six of these. Funding, the most frequently mentioned reason for harbouring reservations, permeates all other clusters of concern and is addressed through them.

Participants' reservations with regard to level of support for inclusion, the second most frequently mentioned area of concern after funding, straddle issues of in-class support and support from the LEA, both of which also involve issues of training of both class teachers and other adults who support inclusion. I present issues of in-class support first, training second and outside support third, for ease and clarity of representation.

"One factor that has consistently been found to be associated with more positive attitudes is the availability of support services at the classroom and the school levels."

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002: 140)

Participants' concerns about in-class support addressed amount of support (most favoured full-time, two staff preferred part-time so as to promote pupil independence); quality of support and liaison with class teacher; LSA training and level of expertise; and one LSA cited poor job security.

And it's good at the moment, because he's got more or less a full-time GA* with him and he gets loads out of my classroom. (...) But what I do object to is that his statement is... It's a full statement, almost, apart from eight hours, and another child has those eight hours really. But what the GA does is: she kind of does both at the same time. But if he is left on his own he can do absolutely nothing without one-to-one support. And I think sometimes, if we are to carry the statement through, fully and he were to have eight hours on his own and the other child received the eight hours he is entitled to, then I think it would be very difficult for that child, and very difficult for me.

*GA: General Assistant

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I think, I mean for some children one-to-one probably wouldn't help. Because some children will still need a level- all children need a level of independence so they'll need to be weaned off of one-to-one. But some children need one-to-one to focus. I mean the example of Toby, if he's got one-to-one help he produces something, if he hasn't he doesn't. You know, he kind of needs the security of one-to-one. And I think when children need that it would be good to provide it until you can gradually wean them off so that they don't need it.

Isabelle (teacher, 3 yrs experience)

Well he doesn't like to be glued on to me to be honest with you I mean I think he tries to stay away from me as much as possible. He doesn't like being told what to do you see. At all.

Norma (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

One teacher spoke of her experience of preparing for the annual review of a child who has a statement and full-time LSA support: when writing her report on this child's progress, this teacher found she did not know what to say, as it was the LSA that worked with the child every day. She spoke of discussing this with one of her more experienced colleagues who said she had also found herself in a similar position. I do not have a transcript of this interview.

"In a number of schools in which we questioned teachers about individual children we were referred to the LSA as these teachers had very little contact with, or knowledge of, the children in question."

(MacBeath et al, 2006: 38)

Artemi: And I'm wondering what would happen if the school gets an application for a child to join your class next year. Who is, say, visually impaired, we'll say totally blind. With full-time LSA, let's be generous. How would that pan out in practice, do you think?

Helen: I don't think there would be any problem at all! With full-time support there would be no problem at all. They would be safe, they would be happy, they could access the curriculum, they would obviously need specialist learning equipment, but as long as that came and their full-time support knew how to use it with the child, I can't see it would be a problem.

Artemi: What about you as a class teacher though? I mean if it were me, I would possibly be thinking, well hang on a minute, I've got 30-odd children here, I've got to differentiate for all of those, and then here's somebody with a very different sort of need that I have to differentiate yet again and I need to find time for this.

Helen: Well would you, if it was visual? You probably wouldn't, would you? It's the resources they use that would be different,

Artemi: But who would think about every activity that you need to do, how this child would be accessing what sort of resources would be needed for that activity

Helen: Well that's if they had the same support assistant every day,

Artemi: Then their support assistant... Oh OK, I see, so you do your planning and then the support assistant provides the resources to

Helen: Yeah. I mean if it was a specialist person, and that's the best really, now if they didn't have somebody like or if they had a different person every day, I think that would be much harder.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Norma: This is actual targets that the SENCo and mum and me have discussed. So we have to do that at least once but we do it more than that. But because of the timing being exactly same every day, I don't like to take him out every afternoon, because like I said to you he misses the normal story telling and things and that's not fair on him then.

Artemi: So how do you take that decision? Of when to take him out and when to keep him in?

Norma: See what they're doing really. (...) And also what mood he is in, to be honest with you. (...)

Artemi: Yeah, of course. And that decision is entirely your own? Or do you talk to [the class teacher]?

Norma: No I normally just say to her "is it all right if I take him out?" and if she wanted him to stay in then she'd say "I'd like him to stay for that". So...

Artemi: And does that sometimes happen?

Norma: It hasn't happened, no, no.

Norma (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

"It was common to find LSAs taking responsibility for differentiating the curriculum. This typically took place voluntarily and in their own time."

(MacBeath et al, 2006: 40)

I have included the entries on this page in order to highlight a weakness in the system. The system. Not, in any way, the people working hard to ensure it functions as effectively as possible.

"Pupils in mainstream schools where support from teaching assistants was the main type of provision were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching in those schools."

(Ofsted, 2006: 5)

"The complexity of supporters' [i.e. LSAs] work and the responsibilities they shoulder have expanded way beyond their original brief as classroom helpers or 'paint-pot washers' to playing an important role in children's learning. (...) Their salaries remain among the lowest of any staff group in local government; temporary and part-time posts are common, and an improved across-the-board package of training, qualifications and pay seems a long way off for many."

(Shaw & Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2001: 2)

In its website the Training and Development Agency for Schools specifies that Teaching Assistants (TAs, also frequently referred to as LSAs) "work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping pupils with their learning on an individual or group basis" and only the more experienced and appropriately qualified Higher Level Teaching Assistants "plan and deliver learning activities under the direction of a teacher and assess, record and report on pupils' progress"

(Training and Development Agency, 2007)

There were no HLTAs in either of the two study schools.

"Although the Department for Education and Employment has said it is not trying to staff schools on the cheap, concerns continue to be raised that supporters are being asked to take on considerable extra responsibility at low pay with insufficient training, particularly in relation to the additional work required of schools in connection with the national literacy and numeracy strategies."

(Shaw & Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2001: 21)

I have a great deal of respect for LSAs (…) And also, I think often these children need the most experienced, trained teachers and not the least experienced and the least trained people to work with them.

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

You know, it's finding the time. Whereas you know some courses, I know [at my previous school] when we were doing courses you've got, if you had to go on an afternoon you've got the afternoon off. (…) Although you had to do all the work yourself, but you didn't have to give up so much of your time if you see what I mean.

Norma (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

I only did the course alongside working. I didn't have any experience before really. I suppose just that… I don't know, just kind of used, I don't know, some sort of… I don't know really what I used, I just used… I don't know my prev- my parenting skills, because I'm a parent. I don't know really. I just did it. I didn't really stop and think

Miriam (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: So how come you were reading about autism this morning?

Norma: Because I've seen a job that's been advertised. To work with an autistic child. So I thought I'd better... I worked with a child last year who had Asperger's. So I thought I would... Again I downloaded a load of stuff of the Internet to have a general read on things.

Artemi: I guess you have very little job security, because...

Norma: Very little. (laughs)

Artemi: Because when your children move on,

Norma: As I said, Chris is leaving this year. Yeah. 12 hours gone that is, out of my time.

Artemi: And... (gesturing to the class we are in)?

Norma: Pat is in year one but it won't be enough hours to s- for me, so I've just started looking around for another one. But that's why I've been to three different schools in five years. Because last in, first out. So, because I've had to keep moving, I'm always the last in! (laughs loudly)

Norma (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

"The temporary and part-time nature of many posts also causes resentment among supporters [i.e. LSAs]. Many find themselves with little alternative but to link jobs together in an unstable chain to try to increase their remuneration, all the time fearing they will lose vital income if links go missing." (Shaw & Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2001: 12)

Almost all teachers interviewed mentioned their concern at their own lack of training, while at least four spoke of feelings of disempowerment. For example:

> And I think we would all need the training ourselves to understand autism. Because at the moment I really haven't got a clue. About how he's going to come in, how he is going to react, what way would I calm him down and sort a routine out. Little things like that, that is what scares you. And, only because you don't have the training.

Caroline (LSA, first year in school)

> And the other thing I really disagree with is that some of us aren't trained. And some of the GAs aren't properly trained to home in on the needs of these children. I mean sometimes it's not very much money for a general assistant, and they haven't been on the appropriate courses, and they don't know what the child's needs are and I don't know what the child's needs are.

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

> So, like I say, we were really lucky because we've got [names a blind child's LSA] that could do brailling and all that lot. But had we hadn't had her and it was just an LSA that had to learn on the job with us, I think it would have been extremely hard. Because we haven't got that knowledge of how to teach Braille or learn… and although he's got a specialist teacher coming in once a week that's only once a week.

Fran (teacher, 10 yrs experience)

"The lack of specialist expertise and professional development emerged as a constant strand in virtually every written or verbal comment from teachers and LSAs."
(MacBeath et al, 2006: 38)

I have so far tried to include representative quotes from as many participants as possible. While this allows for more voices to be heard, the inevitable reductionism involved potentially limits a fuller appreciation of participants' perspectives. Nowhere is this more relevant than on the next page, where I try to represent participants' frustration at a widely perceived lack of support from the LEA. I wish, therefore, at this point to offer a longer extract from my conversation with Penny, a teacher for over twenty years, who spoke of her experience of trying to include an autistic child in her class. Tom, whose transcribed interview appears in full in Appendix D3, also made ample reference to lack of LEA support.

At least ten staff spoke of their frustration at a lack of support from the LEA while they struggled to include disabled children (my words)

Penny: And also to get the parents to see that this was not an ideal situation for the child, or for the rest of the children. You know, it was not only the rest of the children and for that child, she was very stressed at times. Trying to cope in the classroom. You know there was too much stimulation.

Artemi: So, what was the point of view of the parents, or of this advisory teacher? Did they not see what you were seeing?

Penny: Well they would come in and [were] supposed to give advice about trying to integrate her into the classroom. And they saw it from the autistic child's "Oh, you must do this, you must do that". Really without seeing the concerns of the other children in that class.

Artemi: Right. And was that something that you felt able to discuss with this person or was there not very appropriate, very effective communication?

Penny: No, no we thought she was really on the parents' side. In which the parents wanted her to be the mainstream school and we thought the advisory teacher was more on the parents' side than our side. And really, supporting the parents very well and trying to get this child, she'd bend over backwards to do things. And you know, other children were meant to bend over backwards to get this child integrated into the class.

Artemi: Right. So, am I getting this right? That from the school's point of view, ideally this child should have fitted in, really, or not be here at all? And from this advisory teachers point of view,

Penny: Well I think our point of view was: no, this was not the right place for that child. And I think in the long run it was proved right. But at the beginning the parent so wanted her to be in the mainstream school, and then the advi- she obviously spoke to the advisory teacher and she got her on her side and they really pushed to try to get her to stay in and integrate into the school.

Artemi: So when the advisory teacher comes in and says "Oh you ought to be doing this, that or the other" where does that leave you, what do you do with that?

Penny: Well we did try. You know we did all the things she wanted, we set up a special desk for her, she's got these cards which her day is laid out on, all in order so the child can see you know that's supposed to help them so that they know the order of everything

Artemi: A visual timetable?

Penny: Yeah, that's it. Everything that is going to happen we did all that and still it didn't work. You know we did try.

Artemi: Did you think it possibly would? Or did you think from your experience of how it had been so far did you think...

Penny: No. Because I think, perhaps for mild autism it might have done. But not for this particular child. It was just, everything, what we've got on the walls was just too much for her. The noise, as you see our classrooms are not that big, and it was just too much. She just could not cope with all the rest of the children around her and she couldn't have coped with Assemblies or anything.

Artemi: What would happen at Assemblies?

Penny: She didn't go a lot of the time. Sometimes she would go up, and then start screaming or something and we'd have to take her out. And then she wouldn't want to leave. You know, it was very, she was just... it confused her. And then, you know, we'd get the kicking and screaming start if you were trying to move her, which then upset everybody. And it's very distressing for the other children to watch.

I need to reiterate that I am not, in any way, intending to critique either practice or professional judgement. Far from it, I wish to promote kaleidoscopic understanding by drawing attention to assumptions which may have informed professional judgement. Undertaking this research, including the time I spent in Rachel's class at Welcome Park Infant School, has left me overwhelmed with respect and admiration for the efforts expended by staff placed under multiple incommensurable pressures. Perhaps all the more so for those who try every working minute of every working day to implement policies which make little sense to them.

Reservations about physical resources centred around concerns at lack of space and specialist equipment.

Because I've seen what they have in the schools where it's set up specially for blind children. And what we provide, is nowhere near as good. It doesn't have the space, it doesn't have the quietness and it doesn't have the level of expert teaching that he would have had in a separate place. (…) Whereas I've seen units where they have their own computers, like their own sensory areas etc etc etc. And now we're supposed to have recreated all of that in a classroom of 30 children and the classroom is already overcrowded. There is no space for that kind of stuff!

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

But as I say we haven't had, I never taught in a class with more than one or two statemented children so I don't know how it works out if you've got more than that because you'd have so many bodies in the classroom, wouldn't you? What do you do with them all? So that may make problems in the future. I don't know.

Irene (senior teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Because there are children with really severe physical difficulties who need hoists and lifting equipment. It is a space thing again, it is another big issue. At this school you can see how we are really stuck for space (…) you know, our school isn't designed (laughs) you know it was designed [so many] years ago and it's not designed for that. So we don't make that an excuse for saying no we can't do it, we try our very best. But there is a limit to what you can do.

Mary (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Artemi: No I'm just particularly interested in your own viewpoint. I'm not saying that it's going to happen, and I know that it wouldn't be up to you to respond. But if it were up to you, and somebody came tomorrow and said I want my child in a wheelchair to come to this school

Penny: I think probably at the moment there is too much thought on that particular child and not enough thought for the other 29. Whose room and space might be restricted.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Jessica: But, you know, this school, physically this school doesn't lend itself to children with very specific special needs like physical or emotional or learning difficulties.

Artemi: Because…?

Jessica: Well the spaces are restricted, and (...) there is just no space for anybody to go and do anything else in. (...) You know even for children who haven't got difficulties in their behaviour or learning.

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Jessica: And, if I had a child with physical disabilities I would want to make sure, a child who was in a wheelchair or had difficulty walking, you would have to make sure that the school was suitable. Wouldn't you? Physically.

Artemi: Do you think [this school] is?

Jessica: Not for physical disabilities, no. There's too many twists and turns and too many steps. I mean we have had in the past children with ce-, well we've got a child with cerebral palsy here now and she copes quite well, but I mean anything more than a child who could get around independently, you know, somebody who was permanently wheelchair-bound, it would be impossible in a school like this because there is no provision, no space for ramps or stair lifts or anything like that.

At least eight participants referred to pressures on staff. These mostly centred around issues of time and impact on other children, often voiced from the position of other stakeholders.

> But if on the other hand you feel that you're just struggling with the children that you- and you can't look after them properly, you can't educate them properly, it actually has, and I've seen it, it can lead to resentment. From what the parents of other children are saying, or what the teachers say, that you are having to spend far too much time with that child, and you know you hear them say but you can't blame them.
>
> Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

> And also children with extreme behaviour problems, you only have to get one child in your class like that and there is quite a big effect on the other children. And I've had that situation before were parents are going "well, that one child is occupying so much of the teacher's time" and it really does. You know, what a sort of- And, speaking as a teacher, what is the quality of what you are delivering for the rest of the children? How much time and emotion can you invest in the others? So I think that is an issue.
>
> Trevor (teacher, 6 yrs experience)

> We've got about half a dozen children with quite a lot of difficulties. And so this impinges on the school in quite a lot of ways. Not just the funding that we've just mentioned, but also the SENCo (both laugh) because of the annual reviews, and all the paperwork, and things like that. So I've begun to realise that there maybe is a limit to how many children that you can comfortably cope with, without putting the school under a lot of strain. In many ways.
>
> Mary (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

"*We therefore recommend that children in special classes or units, whether attending full or part-time, should not form such a high proportion of the school roll or present such a range of needs as would substantially change the nature of the school.* It should be noted that in some deprived inner-city and remote rural areas many schools already contain a very high proportion of children with mild or moderate learning difficulties or emotional or behavioural disorders. Such schools need considerably better than average facilities for special educational provision for these children and the assimilation of more children with disabilities and significant difficulties would need to be undertaken with great caution."

(DES, 1978: 113, emphasis original)

Miriam: It was so, it seems to be getting so much harder to actually get statements put in place. Which obviously I don't agree with, but it's not… Yeah, that's a big difference I think.

Artemi: Right… And do you think that's a good thing, a bad thing or a kind of a bit of both?

Miriam: Mmm… I think it's stretching the teachers' time too much.

Miriam (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: Thank you. Are there any issues that we haven't touched upon, anything else that would be a bit of a concern that we'd need to really be careful about how we do things?

Penny: Um... (Long pause) Yes, I think it is difficult when you've got somebody like that to not put stress on those other children, stress on the staff, you know there is all those issues.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I find Penny's parting words particularly poignant, especially as she had not mentioned this earlier in her interview. I wonder whether she, or others, may have felt inhibited from voicing such concerns by feeling under close surveillance of a dominant gaze.

Finally, at least six participants alluded to a lack of strategic planning locally and/or nationally.

It's quite interesting actually because we had the Head round from another Infant School in [a neighbouring area] who is taking a blind boy in September. And his statement is considerably less than Fiona's. Considerably less amount of money. Now how does that happen? Because he is just as blind! He needs somebody all day just as Fiona does. So how do they work that out? There's a lot of, I think there's a lot of madness about special needs funding.

Mike (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

If you are an inclusive school, because you are taking children with learning difficulties and all the rest of it, your SAT's are going to go down. So you're going to be penalised on the one hand for being an inclusive school. That's the first contradiction! And it's absolutely there it stares everybody in the face. And what's going to be done about that?

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

So I mean it's not like there is a national programme for this, it's just hit and miss! You know some people do a bit of it, some people don't, I mean apparently some Authorities are keeping open some special schools and closing others, some are closing them all, so what is the directional philosophy behind all of this?

Artemi: We're touching on an awful lot of very important issues and I wonder whether you wanted to tell me which one of those stands out for you as the most important. I mean we are talking about issues of principle, I mean you started off by saying that in principle you think it's a good thing that children would be included in mainstream schools as long as it is well funded, we're talking about funding, we're talking about training, we're talking about the procedure, about who requests the extra support. So there's lots of important issues. I wonder if there's any of those that stands out for you as more important than others?

Denise: Well I think the procedure really. I think sometimes it's very unfair. This happened to me quite a few years ago now: there was a child in my class who was special needs little boy and was finding school difficult. But not to such an extent that I thought he would get a statement, but because the parents were quite articulate, they went for the statement and got it! Now I've had children that have desperately needed a statement because they couldn't do anything at all without an adult with them, or they got behavioural problems, and the money hasn't been forthcoming there.

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Reservations to inclusion: funding, human resources, training, LEA support, physical resources, pressure on teachers, strategic planning.

Practical difficulties
to be resolved?

Silenced by morality?

Practical difficulties
to be escaped?

Other?

I think no teacher worth their salt really will sort of fight against it

It's really got to be looked at properly

It would be impossible in a school like this

I now turn to issues of form, believing this to further support my interpretive judgements of the previous pages. I address questions of positioning, choice of language, sense of agency and constructs of 'the needs of the child' and 'disability'.

I considered all interview transcripts with regard to positioning: the relative clarity and conviction with which participants adopted a particular position and the degree of flexibility with which this appeared to be held. Much though I believe alternative expressions of support for inclusion are worth exploring (for example, "it would not be a problem" and "you've got to stand up and be counted" seem to convey different levels of support) time and space limitations prohibit me from commenting on all participants' positioning. What I regard as particularly noteworthy is an apparent evading of positioning by a number of participants. I offer two such examples over the next couple of pages.

In a paper stemming from Ricoeur's distinction between two forms of hermeneutics, Ruthellen Josselson (2004) problematises researchers' interpretive standpoints by contrasting "the hermeneutics of faith", aiming to restore meaning to texts by attempting "to understand the Other as they understand themselves" with "the hermeneutics of suspicion", aiming to decode meanings that are disguised, in the belief that "experience is assumed not to be transparent to itself: surface appearances mask depth realities; a told story conceals an untold one." Josselson further comments that Ricoeur's choice of the word 'suspicion' may be an unfortunate one, as researchers are not necessarily assuming that participants are consciously censoring their narrative but might nonetheless be drawn to the possibility that "aspects of self-understanding or meaning-making (...) operate outside of the participant's awareness." Analysis from this position would "seek pointers to what is unsaid or unsayable." (*ibid*: 1-15) It is possible, Josselson concludes, "to interpret from both positions as long as the researcher makes clear when and how these shifts occur." (*ibid*: 23)

I entered the analytic phase commited to the hermeneutics of faith, dictated by a perceived moral obligation to re-present participants' meanings rather than pursuing my own, potentially alternative, meaning-making. As my familiarity with transcripts increased, however, additional layers of meaning became harder to ignore. I have since reviewed my ethical responsibility to practitioners and, as I write, believe that suggesting additional meanings, either beyond participants' awareness or potentially silenced by the weight of the dominant discourse, may well be in everyone's interest.

Karen: I feel really nervous now. I'm under the spotlight.

Artemi: Well, I don't know what to do so that you don't because really all this is, it's just trying to see things from your point of view. There are no tricky questions or anything,

Karen: No, that's fine

Artemi: Now when we started talking, probably before I even switched this thing on, we said something about pros and cons, or you said something about there's issues for and issues against, so is this a good point to revisit that statement?

Karen: I think inclusion is great, I think it is brilliant, but you need the support. As a teacher I need the support.

Karen (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

Artemi: OK. Thank you. And could you tell me a little bit more about what the pros and cons, this is kind of thinking we are zooming out now and looking at the whole of issues of inclusion in general, going back to this statement about having advantages and disadvantages. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about, do you think?

Karen: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know! I think inclusion is a really good thing. I think the children actually do, they develop more as a person, in a mainstream school. I think they do. But for them to develop and learn, in a mainstream school, there needs to be the support from the outside agencies that maybe we find it difficult to get.

In my research diary I noted:
As soon as I switched the recorder off Karen said that that was very difficult, because sometimes what is politically correct is not necessarily what you really think or feel. I looked up, smiled and asked her what did I get today, what she really thinks and feels or the politically correct version? Oh no, she immediately assured me, the first; she is not too bothered about political correctness! I thanked her for that, acutely aware that I had heard nothing controversial, whereas I did hear repeated and almost unsolicited assurances that she really does support inclusion.

Extracts from interview with Celia (teacher, 5 yrs experience)
Having negotiated a later start on the day, Celia asked to leave early. Her interview lasted just over ten minutes (1-4 indicate temporal sequence)

1

Artemi: But really I'm interested in your thoughts about schooling for disabled children. And what *you* think works for them

Celia: Yeah, I mean I haven't had much experience myself,

2

Artemi: Yeah, I mean that's precisely why I'm interested to hear people's point of view because it's through the eyes of the mainstream school teacher that I'm interested to see how things look like. So, would you say that that's on the whole a good thing or a bad thing or a mixed thing?

Celia: I mean, well in that case, we've got one teacher to be with him, so that's good. But if you didn't have that it must be awful.

3

Artemi: And if you were the Authority making these decisions, about where such children go to school, what do you think you might be deciding for them?

Celia: What would I think?

Artemi: Mmm.

Celia: To be honest I really don't know whether I think they should be somewhere that caters for them specially, or, I don't really know what I think to be honest.

Artemi: No, no that's fair enough. Not everybody has the time or the energy to think these issues through and not everybody has answers to these.

Celia: No, because I haven't had direct experience. I don't really know to be honest.

Artemi: Is that something that you may want to engage with now, in terms of thinking your thoughts through?

Celia: Mmm, yeah, perhaps I should think about it. And if maybe I had a child, and if I wanted the best thing for that child, if they had special needs, I don't know whether I'd prefer them to be somewhere that had more time and more... well just more... things that are set up specially for them. To deal with them rather than a very busy bustling school where... so many things are happening anyway. And you know even though the best intentions would be to... you know, give them a lovely start with everyone else, would that really happen? Or would it be just too manic, too difficult to do that really? I don't know.

4

Artemi: What would the special school offer? Why might we choose that?

Celia: Just more... more time and... special attention to what they actually need. Focused on what their needs were really. It's difficult, I really don't know.

Artemi: It's hard, isn't it?

Celia: Yeah. I don't know what I think really. All right?

It seems clear to me that some participants were evading positioning; this could represent a conscious effort not to appear to be opposing the dominant discourse of support for inclusion. I decided to follow this up with participants if an opportunity for joint interpretation of findings arose. (Please see pages 256-270)

From a position of seeking meaning, if not aiding "kaleidoscopic understanding", in life stories of bright adolescent boys who engage in "perpetual undesirable behaviour" (p. 132), Peter Clough suggests that "so much of what goes wrong for young people in schools is symptomatic of whole chains of events and social intricacies, so that practitioners find themselves able only to tinker frustratedly on the periphery of chasms of inequality" and goes on to propose that teachers "lack voice in telling their stories of difficulties – their language is being eroded and a new language of the state in education is being – it seems systematically – imposed"

(Clough & Barton, 1998: 143)

Neither my training, nor time and space available, permit me a detailed semiotic analysis of interview transcripts. However, specific words used by a number of participants have intrigued me from early in the interviewing process and I wish here to briefly draw attention to them. Might choice of particular words, I wonder, to refer to the placement of some children in mainstream schools, convey undercurrents of resentment towards these children and/or towards the current educational system?

Just lots of advice, lots of practical resources, if they were just thrown in without any warning, without any help and you know training and that sort of thing, I think I'd feel quite anxious really.

Celia (teacher, 5 yrs experience)

and they're just kind of thrown in,

Trevor (teacher, 6 yrs experience)

Such words appear in survey responses (see for example page 141). They also appear in the first three interviews in one school, their choice openly addressed – albeit briefly – during the third (above right). My next interview in that school was with Karen, who was noticeably apprehensive about expressing her views. I wonder what conversations, if any, these participants might have had among themselves.

Mary: And staff expertise as well, you know, with the very severely disabled, it wouldn't be a problem if you were offered training, if you had the equipment, the space and the training, yeah fine! But I think there is always this fear in schools that, that you know, you'll get dumped on. (Laughing:) that's such an awful thing to say! Once you've taken the child, you know you've got to cope, and so that's what makes some Headteachers fearful and careful. And it's sad, because we haven't got have the confidence that you will get the support that you need for some children.

Artemi: I'm very interested in your choice of words: the fear that you might get dumped on.

Mary: Well that was an awful thing to say.

Artemi: Well no, I'm sure it's... staffroom vocabulary. What I'm trying to get at is: what made you maybe use those words? And what does that mean for teachers?

Mary: I mean, because I believe all children are of value, that is a wrong thing to say. But I think you know that some children are going to cause you more work, more stress, more time, so that's why you feel you are being dumped on. And it's not the child's fault, so it's not something that you're innately thinking about the child, it's just that you are thinking about the workload. And everyone is human, you know!

Mary (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

It's very easy to just dump it all at the feet of teachers in the classrooms and say if they were better teachers there wouldn't be any problems!

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

Even in ordinary, everyday conversation, we are all rhetoricians. Our presentation of views and opinions always, inevitably, reflects the pursuit of our interests through dialogue.

(Mercer, 2000: 82)

It strikes me that, as interviewees were voicing at least some of their concerns to me, there often seemed to be underlying implications that they do not feel as though they have a voice in the debate on, or practice of, inclusive education for disabled children.

You know, I think we don't have any authority to send them away but, how can we cope with them?

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

That's right, so we didn't have no say in this autistic child coming and that was it. You know the parent wanted her to come here and that's her right so, you know, it took a long time for everybody to see this was not the place for her. (...) I don't think parents should have that right to send [her] here when she is disrupting others' education so much.

One teacher spoke of her sheer frustration that at a parent's request the LEA issued a statement stipulating a child's transfer to a special school whereas, when the mainstream school had previously requested a statutory assessment for the same child, the Authority's decision had been not to issue a statement and, therefore, not to grant funding for additional support in mainstream. I do not have a transcript of this interview.

And that is something that I don't feel there has been a proper debate about, or discussion with teachers in the schools at all, it's just been announced we're now inclusive, everyone is inclusive, you have to be inclusive and there we go!

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

And because I think no teacher worth their salt really will sort of fight against it because, you know you believe in education and educating everybody. And I think that, yeah I think they just, somebody somewhere thought "oh well, the teachers will get on with it and they'll find their way of coping with it".

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Miriam: I still... (pause) I wouldn't agree with them going back to all these special schools, a lot of these schools have been shut down haven't they, special schools? I wouldn't agree with that, because I feel that there would be a lot of money needed to start them up again, but on the other hand you're putting too much pressure then on the teachers. I don't know what I think. (Pause) I really don't think there's an answer for that one.

Artemi: It's a tough one. I don't have one, I was hoping that you might come up with one.

Miriam: It's almost like if you get the money then you can make the choice but if you haven't got the money there's no choice really.

Miriam (LSA, 5 yrs experience)

It's only in recent years really when I suppose special schools have been closing down that we've had, or that the council have changed their... (pause) that we've had more children.

Fran (teacher, 10 yrs experience)

The questionnaire which I described on page 154 seems particularly relevant here.

"Putting the needs of the child first" can be seen as a cliché to which most, if not all, practitioners would aspire. With all due respect, however, to every single practitioner whose training and/or experience render such an aspiration unproblematic (and an awful lot of respect is due), I wish to expose some of the controversy surrounding the construct of 'the needs of the child' and present a number of issues as these arose out of successive readings of interview transcripts.

Any reference to 'the child's needs' can harbour a number of assumptions; for example what these 'needs' are and their relative significance, how they have arisen, what constitutes an appropriate response to them, or who has the authority to determine an answer to any of these questions. Over the next pages I explore each of these in turn.

"Teachers vary in their tolerance level for learning and behavioural difficulties. They also vary in *what* behaviour they find disturbing. Thus, one teacher may be seriously upset by a verbally aggressive child while another may regard this as a relatively minor irritant. Similarly, one teacher may regard a child's lack of progress in reading with relative equanimity, while another may regard it as a matter for serious concern. The reaction will depend on the teacher, and on the expectations of the teacher's senior colleagues, the child's parents and the local community. In this sense, teachers 'construct' special needs."

(Galloway et al, 1994: 10, emphasis original)

"[T]he idea of special needs is an idea, not a positive fact about people."

(Fulcher, 1995: 12)

"For it seems to me that 'special educational needs' is a phrase with no clear inherent meaning, but which functions to reinforce an enduring 'otherness'."

(Potts, 1998: 17)

"Three features of a Foucauldian framework of discipline can be recognized in the process of opening and maintaining a Record of Needs:

hierarchical observation;
normalizing judgements;
the examination.

(...) Its ostensibly omnipresent and omniscient gaze attends selectively to pupils' professionally constructed needs and ignores their desires. It is a disciplinary technique which validates teachers' subjective judgements about pupils and parents, creating compliant subjects (…)"

(Allan, 1999: 75-76, writing of the Record of Needs, the Scottish equivalent of the Statement)

I've only ever taught one child in mainstream who I think would have probably been better off from his own point of view in a special setting. And in fact he did leave the infant school at the end of year two and went into a junior school in a hearing unit of a special school. Because he was very deaf, profoundly deaf.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Artemi: I mean I don't know the situation and what I've heard is that he was very good at lip reading but he was still not getting the information that the others were getting. So I am trying to understand how in your mind this worked, what was he missing?

Helen: I suppose it was his vocab- the sort of vocabulary that he was getting, I mean I don't know how much he lip read, but the sort of vocabulary that he was getting, was getting more difficult for him to understand. What words meant. He could perhaps lip read the word but he didn't have enough knowledge of what those words meant and associated ideas. To understand. I can remember trying to explain to him what a gas mask was and it was impossible. He could not understand, I didn't have the words to explain to him, words that he understood or could understand me saying, to understand what this gas mask was all about. You know he couldn't understand what it was or why anyone would need it.

Artemi: Right. And you got the other children to understand this by...

Helen: But they understood. That was just one incident that I can remember.

[F]or a child who's blind (...), I would make sure the school had every facility that he needed or she needed that they would have got in a separate school, a school for blind children. Because I've seen what they have in the schools where it's set up specially for blind children. And what we provide, is nowhere near as good. It doesn't have the space, it doesn't have the quietness and it doesn't have the level of expert teaching that he would have had in a separate place. (...) So even though the children respond really well to this kid and I think he's benefiting, gaining a lot from school, I think also his needs aren't actually being properly met.

Tom (teacher, 15 yrs experience)

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I had a v- quite an autistic child in my classroom who found it very difficult to integrate into the classroom. Mainly because they can't cope with a situation where it's noisy, where there is bright things on the wall, and really that a mainstream school was just the wrong setting for her.

I wonder whether comments which focus more on differences than similarities between children, and which use 'need' to legitimise segregated education, are the outcome of a considered view (that specialist facilities *are* more important than a sense of belonging to one's local community), or whether they might be rooted in culturally inherited assumptions (for example that providing specialist facilities is a fundamental requirement usually met by institutions other than mainstream schools.)

"The great thinkers of disciplines from which special education has drawn (usually psychology) have built impressive theory that gave credibility and stature to particular, and often mistaken, ways of viewing learning, viewing children and viewing the difficulties that they experience at school."

(Thomas, 2007: 253)

"Despite the humanitarianism apparently contained in the notion of 'catering for special needs' or 'acting in the child's best interests', children receiving the label become marginalized members of the society. The stigmatic social identity becomes a means by which children can be segregated from their peer group, friends, home and local community, denied access to the educational experiences offered to 'normal' children and offered a curriculum which may subsequently deny them access to further education, training or most types of employment."

(Galloway et al., 1994: 117)

"Many other practices, which are undertaken in the name of 'care', have been identified as abusive by disabled people. These include medical practices (such as excessive physiotherapy) (…)."

(Swain, French, & Cameron, 2003: 147)

"When I went to give this talk at the Northampton Society of Autism it took place at the special school. That was one hell of a school! Not only did it have a trampoline, it had a multi-sensory room as well and who needs drugs when you can get high on multi-sensory! I adore multi-sensory environments, I am a multi-sensory junkie. And it had a stationery cupboard that was to die for. And it had lines, all its corridors were just lines and lines and lines galore! Thank God I wasn't educated there, I wouldn't have learned a thing."

(Blackburn, 1998: 82)

Does a child with autism 'need' a distraction-free environment any more than a toddler may 'need' chocolate cake? Should educational provision be limited to that which keeps an autistic child happy in their isolation or should it include opportunities for the child to engage with their local community? At a time when government policy asserts that Every Child Matters, whom do disabled children matter to? Who problematises their 'needs' and shapes provision accordingly? Who takes responsibility for this? Can others wash their hands of any responsibility?

Ascertaining how and why 'needs' may arise could be as problematic as identifying them. It is highly likely that, had I asked the question 'do you think needs arise from within the child or from an interaction between the child and their educational environment?' participants would have opted for the latter. As it happens, the question did not explicitly arise. Repeated readings of interview transcripts have led me to believe that a 'within child deficit' model is often assumed and may remain unexamined.

Artemi: And what if it were your own child? Where would you send your own child?
Jessica: I think it would be dependent on what the problem was.

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

And there was a small room (...). So she stayed in there with her helper most of the time, and it was hoped to slowly integrate her into her class at small chunks. But it just didn't work because she would hear something when she was in that room going on in the classroom that she decided she wanted to join in. And then she would come in, perhaps sing, make a noise, do a dance, and disrupt everybody else. And then if you tried to settle her down and sit in her place, because she had a special place on, she brought a special cushion hopefully to integrate her, and then she would very often decide she didn't want to sit there and if it didn't go her way it would cause an enormous tantrum where she had to be removed. So, you know, I think it just depends on what their disability is, whether it works or not.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

I believe that, once again, "kaleidoscopic understanding" is called for. It could help in seeing this situation from the autistic child's point of view. It could also be used to highlight a realisation that, in this context, dedicated staff made the best decisions that their particular resources, training and experience afforded them. I wish to reiterate my conviction that it is unethical to disapprove of others' practice on the grounds of insights they do not possess. This applies as much to this quote as to those that follow over the next few pages.

I mean last year I had a little boy in my class who desperately, desperately needed help, and it's still going on now. They're still sorting out provision for him. And, in fact, when the statement went through, it was refused. And he desperately needs a statement. Everybody agrees with that.

Denise (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

"However, it is hypocritical to continue to pretend that the assessment and labelling of children as EBD is solely for their 'good', rather than the 'good' of the wider educational system and ultimately the wider society."

(Galloway et al., 1994: 117-8)

Jessica: But if it was, if I had a child who was autistic, sort of on the spectrum properly, no I think I would want a specialist unit. I'm not convinced that mainstream school is appropriate.

Artemi: Right. And you say that because...?

Jessica: Well, because I've had experience of that and I've seen autistic units and I just think they're just so much better provision for the child.

Artemi: Yes, thank you. I was wondering whether you are seeing this from the point of view of the teacher, or the autistic child, or the other children...

Jessica: Oh, no, from- Well, I think it has to be from the child's point of view, personally first of all and foremost you are doing what's best for the child. And I think that goes for all the things that we've talked about. If it's not, if the child is not going to be able to get 100% benefit from education then the child is not in the right place.

Jessica (senior teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

"Special educational needs are needs that arise within the educational system rather than the individual, and indicate a need for the system to change further in order to accommodate individual differences."

(Dyson, 1990: 59)

"Inclusion is often seen as simply involving the movement of pupils from special to mainstream contexts, with the implication that they are 'included' once they are there. In contrast, I see inclusion as a never ending process, rather than a simple change of state, *and as dependent on continuous pedagogical and organizational development within the mainstream*."

(Ainscow, 1999: 218, emphasis added)

Determining an appropriate response to diversity seems yet another matter of subjective judgement. Should provision focus on what is different about a child? What kind of response to diversity should Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) promote in mainstream schools? And is it ever appropriate to turn a blind eye to a child's impairment? I offer here quotes from participants which may reflect their stance on these issues.

I mean in infants they are all quite innocent but when she gets into like the junior school, they're not quite so innocent over there. So, you know they are looked upon as being different. You know, even though we've done all our PSHE and tried to set, you know integrate them and all that, children when they get to that age are not so accommodating.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

"They are looked upon as being different." Was this a slip of the tongue or does this reflect a stance to diversity which sees difference-as-defect and an assumption that the remit of PSHE is to minimise, eliminate or conceal diversity?

Artemi: Yeah, you said that they had all their needs met, and I might appear to be asking the obvious but what were their needs? And how were they met?

Trevor: Well, they had physical- Well, first of all the kids needed to be fed, and toileted and all that sort of stuff. They all needed physical, whether it was- They had lots of standing frames, and they had a session with the physio every day. A lot of them were on these speech and language programmes where they would go off to the speech therapist, and all that sort of stuff. And occupational therapy, so they had special, they could do sewing or cooking or all that sort of thing. So, I mean I don't know, talking about it like that, it sounds like well, you could do that in a school.

Trevor (teacher, 6 yrs experience)

I think Trevor meant 'you could do that in a mainstream school', but it seemed too intrusive to insert '[mainstream]' in his interview transcript.

"[Disabled children] also see themselves as pitiful because they are socialised into accepting disability as a tragedy personal to them. This occurs because teachers, like other professionals, also hold to this view of disability, curriculum materials portray disabled people (if they appear at all) as pathetic victims or arch villains, and their education takes place in a context in which any understanding of the history and politics of disability is absent."

(Oliver, 1993: 55)

Penny: [W]e get together and think what targets he needs to meet and most of his are he's got to do special exercises, sometimes if he uses a pen for too long a period it can make his joints ache, so he's also got a little laptop he can use, if he needs to. But we have found now that he is not using his laptop. Because he likes to be like the other children and sit and write. And whether, this is a very difficult slope really, because whether he is getting pains in his hands and not telling us, because he wants to be like the other children. Or if he's coping, it's difficult to say. (Laughs)

Artemi: That's an interesting one.

Penny: Yeah, so it's very difficult to tell at his age but that's what we were advised to use, one of these [brand of laptops]. And then we can print it off on the mainstream computer, if need be. But he very rarely uses it.

Artemi: And how do you feel about this?

Penny: Well I think we don't mind because it's nice for him to feel like he's like the rest and that he is not made too special, you know. So that's all right.

Penny (teacher, 20+ yrs experience)

Identifying which 'needs' of the child are being 'put first' here might be more ironic than informative.

I've only got Tara who has got cerebral palsy, I mean she wouldn't be in any shape or form excluded from school because of her disability or sent anywhere else because it's fairly mild. But she copes so well, I mean she is brilliant, so… That might be interesting. I mean she does football, joins in football, and everything. Though interestingly she has just started to get a little bit embarrassed and tearful about things. And I was just thinking the other day she always joined in everything. PE, gym, everything. She's had a go, I mean she's very slow and she tosses around a bit, but she doesn't mind she has a go and then this last term she started to get tearful. And I think it's because the other children are getting competitive. End of year two, they are getting a bit, which they are not really up until then. I mean they don't get competitive over the simple things. But I think they're certainly getting a bit competitive and they were dancing the other day, and because it was a circular dance and she was much slower than the others, they were all sort of building up behind her. And that's the first time I've seen her upset with a dance because up until then it was all very individual or with a partner or… And then I thought this is interesting, because this is almost paralleling what I was saying about that little boy at the end of year two, with the hearing problems. Suddenly life gets much trickier at that age. (…) It's a shame, but… that's life, isn't it?

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Finally, on a number of occasions I was left wondering where in the hierarchy of others' needs 'the needs of the child' might be positioned.

Artemi: And if it were up to you, if you and I had a brief to restructure educational provision and we could decide what we do with children who have some sort of need for additional provision. What do you think we might choose to do, send them to mainstream schools or, special schools or...?

Helen: I don't think you can make a blanket decision. Because we're talking as you said before we're talking about the disabled, what do we mean by it? If you're talking a physical impairment, generally speaking that does not cause any adjustment that the class teacher has to make to the content or even the way that they teach. If it's visual or auditory impairment then it does affect how the teacher has to prepare the lesson. If it's behavioural it grossly affects the way the teacher has to deliver the lesson. So it depends what type of disability it is really.

Artemi: OK. Well let's take all of those one at a time, because you're absolutely right they are very very different issues. So, in terms of providing for children with physical impairments that actually impact on their mobility, what would be the position of the Authority?

Helen: As a teacher, I would say that it would not be a problem in terms of doing your job in the classroom. I can see it would be a problem in terms of finance for the school, because you'd have to provide for that child throughout the whole school building, not just in the classroom, which is going to have a big impact. From the point of view of the other children, it's obviously a good thing because they're learning to, you know understand that people have disabilities and how to relate to them so that's not a problem. So it depends who you are in the school, if you are the class teacher-

Artemi: And from the point of view of that child?

Helen: (slight pause) I would assume... that they would benefit from it. Of being seen as an ordinary member of society.

Helen (teacher, 17 yrs experience)

Referring to Foucault as having offered a "very unsettling critique of both the cognitive structures and institutional arrangements of modern society", not least with regard to the "fabrication of knowledge and power" (p. 683-4), Roth refers to the work of Ball (1990) who asserts that schools are "fundamentally concerned with moral and social regulation" (p. 685) while reminding the reader of Foucault's own words that "power becomes a machinery that nobody owns" (p. 690). Roth lists three "disciplinary technologies" of education systems: "surveillance" (making constant observation possible through ordering bodies in space and time), "the written examination" (documenting an individual's capacity through cumulative records, thus tracing people over time) and "normalizing judgements" (generating a system, through quantification, for assigning individuals to ranks above or below the mean) (pp. 687-8). He adds that "normalizing a population is itself a move toward homogeneity, pushing to the tails anything idiosyncratic, peculiar and unfamiliar" (p. 688). Finally, he refers to Ryan (1991) as having stated: "As long as schools continue to use an organizational scheme geared to watching, testing and normalizing students, their efforts to reduce inequality (…) are bound to fail" (p. 691).

(Roth, 1992)

Issues of form:

How are the nature and significance of 'the needs of the child' perceived?

Do practitioners experience a sense of agency in the development of inclusion policy and practice?

What underlying assumptions may be reflected in language used?

First of all and foremost you are doing what's best for the child

I don't feel there has been a proper debate

There is always this fear in schools that you'll get dumped on

I don't think parents should have the right to send [her] here

Inclusion is probably right

You've got to stand up and be counted

I don't know what I think really

It doesn't really work for some children

Without Sophia at the seaside

I stuff my papers in my rucksack and stretch my arms. The wind has died down now and the sun is beginning to break through thin cloud. I climb down from the rock carrying my rucksack and a sense of unease.

"Was that good enough?" I ask myself, prepared to find it wanting.

"That was fine", part of me replies. "You have come to see inclusion in a new light through this research and, a bit like the Napoleon picture, your thesis may convey this to others."

"It was appalling" another part of me replies. "You have offered little more than a superficial semantic analysis when you know your texts are bursting with additional layers of meaning. You have mutely danced with mutilated transcripts."

"And is that a criticism?" I am the first to rush to my defence, "Is muteness unfitting? Can one only communicate meaning by literally spelling it out? And what alternative is there to quoting extracts of conversations, especially for a researcher who respects participants' time but whose lack of foresight has created an absence of well considered informed consent to publish entire interview transcripts? You *know* it was a conscious decision to avoid a finite interpretation by presenting a lot of participants' own words. And in any case" I continue without

pausing for breath "if I set out to pan for gold but find enough scattered on the surface to fill my pouch, why pan for more now?"

She is right you know, Patricia Potts calls from further away, "multi-faceted interpretations are much more useful, as they acknowledge inescapable social and political complexities" (Potts, 1998: 27).

"What about the Napoleon picture?" a reader pitches in.

"Ah, that" I welcome the opportunity to explain. "That is about the picture I could not get permission to reproduce and asked Sophia to search for 'Napoleon illusion' on Google images. At first glance it seems to be an almost dull nature scene, which you could look at time after time and remain satisfied that you have seen all there is to see: a couple of trees by the sea and Napoleon's tomb in the foreground, a boat in the distance. But once you have spotted Napoleon's figure, you can hardly look at the picture again and not see him there."

"You can't leave it at that!" myself, my very own worst critic, attacks, "you've *got* to spell at least *this* one out."

I hesitate. (When heavily involved in something it is easy to assume- no, this will never do.) (Kaleidoscop- no.)

"I believe my thesis has nothing to do with Napoleon the historic figure, but may have a lot to do with his outline in this image foregrounding and at once reshaping the background." And that's where I'm leaving it I tell myself with a decisive nod, my readers with a smile.

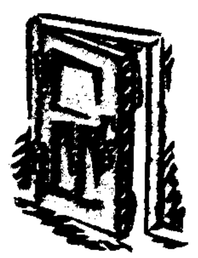
I would like to bring this section to a close by offering a snapshot of contemporary life in a mainstream infant school. What follows is a fictional account of morning break time at the imaginary setting of 'Mara Santime Infant School'. This account is based on information I collected and events I experienced during the course of this research project, as well as in my previous work of twelve years as a peripatetic teacher. This snapshot is offered from the point of view of a handful of teaching and support staff during one morning's break. Isolated interactions are represented in separate columns; as individual conversations attract participation from more staff, so relevant columns merge. Illustrations of open and closed doors indicate people entering and leaving the staff room. All characters are fictional but have been inspired by a number of real people I have encountered; some people may recognise aspects of themselves in the characters I have constructed, but nobody whom I know should be able to find themselves in their entirety in these pages. Please see pages 278-291 for a discussion of fictional representation of research.

Morning break at Mara Santime Infant School

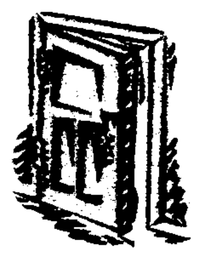
I wonder if I should move Jade to the squirrels, Helen thought as she hurried into the staff room and made for the coffee machine. *She has been doing quite well in literacy recently, I'm sure she is ready to move to the top group.* She poured herself a coffee, winced at the smell of the milk and poured it down the sink, no longer bothered about being one of the few people in this school that got rid of stale milk. All of this time her mind was still racing with school thoughts. *Must remember to let Aaron put a smiley face on the chart after break, he worked so hard this morning! Oh, and I never gave Lucy and Emily the stickers I promised them, must do it as soon as they come in from play.* And only then, almost a minute after coming in, did she notice the velvet silence, the calm sunshine and the coffee's rich aroma.

For a couple of precious moments she stood by the sink, coffee in both hands held close to her face, and let the stillness and quietness seep through her. Sounds from the playground and the rest of the school reached but did not bother her. She silenced her mind of school thoughts. She felt the sun warm on her face, smelt the coffee and a smiled. Blissful tranquillity. A most welcome change from the busy presence of her thirty children, all needing her attention.

She drew in a second long breath, savouring the moment. And then, quite uninvited, non-school thoughts started creeping in. *I wonder how Sophie is feeling... Her temperature must have gone down by now...* Funny how the ordinary intensity of a normal day in class can keep everything else, even her daughter's health, out of her mind.



"Ah... anything for a cup of real coffee!" Tina interrupted her thoughts.
"They're all out then, are they?" asked Helen.
"Yeah... You should have seen Paul, really having a good go at doing up his zip by himself!" Tina said with a smile, pouring herself a cup of coffee.
"Oh, bless! And did he manage?" The two women walked over to the easy chairs and sat down by the window.
"He didn't really have long enough to try. Jenny turned to him as soon as she did her own coat up and went 'let me help you Paul' and before he knew it he was all zipped up and on his way to the playground."
"I suppose it must be hard for the other children *not* to help him when they see him struggling. I mean, we do encourage them to help each other, don't we? It seems so daft to be saying: do help anybody else but don't help Paul because he's got to learn. Oh, hi." They both looked up and smiled

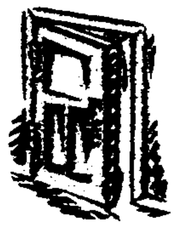


"...and so I said to him next time I see you touch that it will be straight to Mrs Jordan's office. Morning ladies! Oh, isn't the sun bright today!" Carol picked up a cup and, popping a

at Carol and Mary entering the staff room. Tina raised her hand in a 'hello' gesture and replied to Helen

"I know, they must think we're completely bonkers. And anyway, it's the natural thing to do, isn't it? I mean, don't *you* have to keep stopping yourself from doing things for him? I know *I* do!"

"Yeah, I know what you mean" replied Helen, thinking how fortunate it was that both she and Tina had very similar ideas about how best to support children. Paul had hemiplegia and so had limited use of his left side; he walked with a noticeable limp and could not move his left hand and fingers at will, although he could make some arm movements. Both Tina and Helen shared a sense of respect for Paul (in the same way that they respected every child as an individual and loathed talking down at them), saw their job as creating opportunities for him to grasp new skills and knowledge (again, the same as with any other child) and were anxious that the other children would also grant him space to develop. Although they could both feel the resonance between their respective views, neither was able to articulate these in a way that preserved their distinctiveness. Offering children



Lesley walked in holding a pile of writing books and moments later Jack held the door open for Barbara and Pam, then followed them to the urn.

"Hey, Lesley, that bingo game went down a treat! Did yours enjoy it too?" he asked.

"Mmm!" she replied sipping her coffee on her way to the nearest chair "that was a great idea!" She sat down and placed her coffee on the floor, then turned back towards Barbara still by the urn: "By the way tea bag inside, carried on talking as she walked to the urn: "About time we had a bit of sun too! Roll on summer, that's what I say! So anyway, he was OK after that, but I tell you there was a moment when I thought it's either him or me in this class today!" Mary, nodding understandingly, picked up a cup from the draining board, glanced inside and put it back again, then picked another one, threw in a teabag and waited for Carol to finish with the hot water.

"It's awful when you get days like this, isn't it?" she said stepping up to the urn "and all you can do is be patient, try and stay calm and hope they arrive in a better mood the following day!"

Carol and Mary continued their conversation as they walked across the room to the easy chairs opposite Helen and Tina. The staff room was not big; at the top end of the room, on the wall to the left of the door, was the sink and all the tea and coffee making facilities; at the other side of the room was the seating area: a dozen or so easy chairs arranged in a square with a pine coffee table in the middle. A lopsided pile of books from a book club and an almost empty box

opportunities to learn is, after all, the mission of every educationist. Their difference probably lay in the quality of the connection they were each able to generate with individual children (and with one another, for that matter). Not a concept that everyday language caters for.

In Paul's previous school, staff had also conscientiously created appropriate learning opportunities for him. They knew that he was brain damaged from birth so had not expected his learning to keep up with that of his peers. They had concluded that the best way to cater for his individual needs was to let him do some literacy and numeracy work with his LSA at his own pace and also allocate some time each day for physiotherapy exercises. And Paul had done well, made many friends, and thrived in the lack of pressure for academic achievement. His family had moved to Cityville shortly after his 6th birthday and had chosen to live near Mara Santime Infant School because of its reputation as an inclusive school. Paul had started in Year Two at the beginning of the year, so this was his third term here. Here they, too, were

how did Ella get on with that word-matching game today?" she asked as she was opening the top book on her lap.

"Oh fine, fine," Barbara replied, "in fact it was really interesting to watch her, I could tell you some more when you have time."

"Yeah, thanks, that would be great."

The two LSAs walked to the far end of the room and sat on the chairs against the back wall. Jack sat opposite them, next to his fellow teacher immersed in her writing books. He took a few moments to take in what was going on in the staff room, then swiftly decided that he neither wished to join the conversation to his left, about the job prospects of Tina's partner, nor the one to his right, about inclusion and social justice. Barbara and Pam at the opposite end of the room were talking in too soft voices for him to hear and, not expecting to find their conversation of much interest anyway, he picked up a gardening book from the coffee table and flicked through the pages.

"Have you seen that Nearlocal

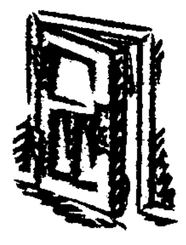
of chocolates with a card all but covered the coffee table. Morning break time was usually quieter than lunchtime in the staff room, with Reception children having a different playtime to Years One and Two and a couple of members of staff always out on playground duty. The two teachers now sat down on the row of chairs along the side wall, opposite Helen and Tina.

"I just don't know what I'd have done if he hadn't come to his senses" continued Carol "and you know I tried so hard to be polite and I drew a deep breath and said to him please would you stop doing that and I said it again and blow me if he took any notice at all and I just find it so hard to concentrate and carry on with the story and it's not fair on the other children is it, just because one child decides to be naughty and I find it such a challenge to stay calm when I think any minute now he could throw a book across the room or poke someone with a pencil."

"But what can you do?" pondered Mary. "I mean really, don't you find that sometimes all it takes is just one

doing all they could to cater for his needs. They reasoned that his brain damage did not extend beyond the part that controls movement, so they generated expectations and opportunities for academic achievement. Here, too, Paul had done well, made new friends and rose to the challenge of learning. Helen did her planning for the whole class with the other Year Two teachers and spent some time each morning discussing with Tina what they needed to modify for Paul. (Well, taking Tina's advice mostly; it was she who had the experience with these things.) They rarely discussed school issues during morning break, in an unvoiced shared understanding that these were fifteen precious minutes in which one's mind is best to relax from the intensity of providing for thirty children all at once. Right now they were chatting about home life.

"So it's very much watch this space," Tina was saying "but I



Sarah Jordan was a popular and much respected Headteacher. Caring and efficient, she often chose to take a break at the same time as her staff. She walked in smiling at everyone, poured herself a coffee and went to sit by Helen.

Infant School has advertised for a full-time LSA?" Barbara all but whispered to to Pam.

"Didn't know you were looking" her colleague replied.

"They've cancelled Ella's review again, and the Juniors can't advertise until they know how many hours she'll have."

"Cancelled it again have they?"

"Yeah, Psychologist couldn't make it or somewhat. Anyway Nearlocal Infants have-"

"Oh Babs but you can't, what about Josh? He'd really miss you next year! Not to mention I would!"

Barbara gestured to Pam to keep her voice down "I know, I know, you think I won't miss you all? But I need my full hours, you know I do." Pam knew. Neither of them was paid a high salary to support the learning of statemented children. Barbara had no formal qualifications but was well respected for her experience of fifteen years or so; Pam was less experienced but held a City & Guilds

child to arrive in a strop and it very quickly destabilises your whole class? And it could be anything, couldn't it? Maybe they went to bed late or haven't had any breakfast or maybe someone had a go at them before coming in to school... I mean they come in every morning carrying their own world on their little shoulders, don't they?"

"Of course they do but so do we and the bottom line is: this is a school and certain kinds of behaviour are just not tolerated. You want to be loud or rude? Go and be loud or rude anywhere you like but not in my class. Do you know what I mean?"

"Oh sure, sure."

"You know, I don't see why I should have to put up with this sort of behaviour every day. Every single day, you know? It's a lot. If a child like Roger has to come into my class then he should be given adequate support to

really hope he gets to hear soon so we all know where we stand, the uncertainty is killing us. And how about you?"
"Oh we're fine," replied Helen "other than Sophie was running a bit of a temperature this morning so I didn't send her to Nursery."
"Oh, sorry to barge into your conversation like this," said Sarah sitting down next to Helen, "but what is this I hear? Is Sophie not well?"
"No, I was just telling Tina, she was complaining of a headache this morning and had a bit of a temperature so I didn't send her to Nursery, she's gone to my mother-in-law's instead."
"Ah, poor mite, hope she's better soon"
"Oh I do hope she feels better soon" said Tina and Sarah both at the same time.
"Thank you, I am sure she will" said Helen trying to ignore the powerful urge to flee school and rush home to cuddle Sophie. If her temperature didn't drop, Helen would ask her mother-in-law to take her to the doctor's tomorrow. With the corner of her eye she caught sight of the book on stress that Mary had just picked up.

Certificate in Learning Support. "So how is Becks and her hay fever these days?" Pam asked. Barbara understood. She, too, had seen Sarah come in and sit next to Helen by their side. They both knew that their Headteacher would do all she possibly could to hold on to her valued members of staff. Sarah was herself well aware of the issues and quite frustrated at the impossibility of creating job security for staff fulfilling transient requirements.
"Becks? Not so good on a day like this" replied Barbara, "took her to the doctors last week and got a prescription but it's been raining ever since, so she's been all right. Lucky I popped into the chemists yesterday, she didn't half need her tablet this morning! So yeah, she's OK with her tablet, she is. Thanks for asking."
Feeling unable to discuss what was at the forefront of their minds, the two LSAs fell silent for a while.

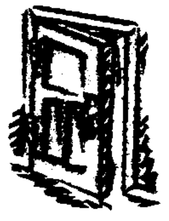
control his temper without me having to worry about him as well as my other 29 children at the same time. It's just not fair on them, is it? I mean let's be honest here. I have no problem whatsoever with teaching Roger and the likes of Roger but I just think it's not right if the rest of my class end up missing out because I have to sort *him* out all the time."
Carol took a deep breath and, sighing, decided she should better change the subject. "Anyway," she went on reaching to the pile of books on the coffee table, "what do we have here?"
She picked up an oriental recipe book and turned over a few pages.
"Oh I got that for my sister-in-law last Christmas" said Mary peering over. "Paid full price for it too. It was worth it though, she truly loved it! There's a really simple recipe for chicken with cashew nuts in there, which is absolutely delicious!"
Carol flicked through the pages, found this recipe and studied it carefully. Mary leaned over to the coffee table and picked out a book about beating stress at work.
"This is the one for me!" she joked.

"Oh I was thinking of buying that!" Helen called across to her colleague and nodded with a smile. Barbara and Pam looked up at the book, then at each other, and burst out laughing, saying they both need their own copies. Carol exchanged a quick glance with Mary, but neither voiced their thought that Learning Support Assistants, with no planning to do or reports to write, surely can't know what real work-related stress is all about.

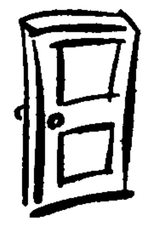
Lesley closed one more writing book and added it to the pile building up on the floor. She took a sip of coffee and looked up to see the book Mary was holding.
"I'd love to see you all try to find time to read it!" she joked as she opened the next exercise book. Sometimes it was hard to discipline herself to stay on top of her marking; but she knew she needed to talk to Barbara at the end of today, so she either had to finish marking the children's work now or take it all home and miss choir practice in the evening.

"Actually, I wonder if we should buy a copy for the reception classes" Sarah said with a hint of a smile. "I received some papers today requesting a place for September for a little girl with Down's Syndrome."
"Not *another* one!" exclaimed Jack, amidst more expressions of surprise.
"She will be well supported by an LSA, of course-" started Sarah but was interrupted by Carol:
"Oh, I should certainly hope so, but that's not the point, is it? I mean, the LEA may think it makes it OK if they attach so many hours of support but how big do they think our classrooms are? We'd have to do a Mary Poppins and let some float off the ceiling if we are to fit all these children and their additional helpers in!"
"And they'll have that boy in the wheelchair as well, won't they, next year?" added Mary.
"Well, we'll have to see how best we can manage, won't we?" calmly stated Sarah, trying to quieten the agitation. "If parents are choosing us because of our track record as an inclusive school, then I guess we need to be proud of our work!" she added with a smile, trying to instil some enthusiasm in her staff. She knew they all supported inclusion in principle, but recognised it wasn't easy in practice.
"I'd love to see what our SATs results look like when next year's Reception reach Year Two!" mocked Carol.

Sarah smiled: "Well, I guess we'll just have to help them all do the best they can. You'd want the best for her if she was your daughter, wouldn't you?"
"Of course I would" replied Carol with a smile, keeping to herself the thought that, in her mind, what is best for a child with Down's Syndrome may well be a school that is tailor-made to her needs, with expert staff and specialist resources on tap; not a mainstream school with non-specialist staff falling over backwards to try to educate a child that cannot but be marginalised while the majority benefit from their first-hand experience of diversity. Carol, sensing she was alone in thinking this way, judged it best to keep such views to herself. Sarah, on the other hand, had concerns of her own. She did know that when that year group took their SATs the school results would probably take a nosedive. If prospective parents noticed the dip, they may choose a different school for their children and hamper the school's income. Sarah knew she had to walk a tightrope of acting with moral integrity (welcoming all children in an inclusive school that offers every-one sound preparation for adult life) and being a prudent pragmatist, ensuring the school remains financially viable.



There was a quiet knock and Paula, the school secretary, poked her head round the door. "Sarah, I'm really sorry to interrupt, but could I please borrow you for a minute?"
"Sure" said Sarah leaving her cup on the table, "what's the matter?"
"I've got a very irate gentleman in the office and he wants to speak to you. It looks as if Roger threw an apple core across the playground and it went through the railings and hit this poor old man as he walked by." Paula continued in a softer voice: "He was making a fuss out there in front of the children and I've managed to get him into the office, but he's just so cross about everything: he is saying that we let the children roam around like wild animals and that standards keep dropping and schools aren't what they used to be. Please would you try and talk to him? I *have* tried, but nothing I've said has made any difference."
Sarah was already on her way to the door, as the others started to all talk at once.
"Are we sure it was Roger?" Sarah asked Paula, closing the door behind her.



"I told you that boy is trouble! I wouldn't be surprised if he took aim before throwing" sighed Carol, shaking her head dismissively.
"Poor man" mused Barbara, "imagine walking along, minding your own business and suddenly an apple core attacks you from the school playground!"
"But how can you be so sure it was Roger?" Tina asked Carol.
"How come he was eating in the playground anyway? He shouldn't have gone out until he'd finished his snack." Mary commented to nobody in particular.
Pam felt this as a stab in her back (she was the one who let the class out to play) but chose to stretch out and say "Well you can't say it's ever dull here!" Nobody likes confrontations; letting things go was what she usually did every time she felt a teacher was criticizing her. Surely she can't be expected to check everybody's hands and pockets every time they all leave the classroom, she thought to herself, and it would be wrong to always suspect Roger and keep asking him to prove he was up to no mischief.
"Guilty as charged" announced Jack folding his arms and stretching his legs out.
"Oh Jack that does sound unfair!" exclaimed Helen.
"Well he's not exactly innocent, is he?" Carol mocked.
"For goodness' sake, it's only an apple core!" Lesley said to the floor as she opened another exercise book. "At least he's had a healthy snack!"

"You have to feel sorry for him, don't you?" Helen turned to Tina, "he can't help it if he feels angry a lot of the time."
"No, I suppose not, certainly if you put family background into the equation" Tina reflected.
"Life can be so unfair to some children, can't it, because you can't say he comes in to school ready to learn, can you?" Helen firmly believed that when children are struggling emotionally they need help, not punishment.
"Actually, you've just reminded me," Tina

"Poor chap" repeated Barbara, "he probably didn't know what hit him!"
Pam may or may not have got the pun but joined in with Barbara's laughter all the same. She then squinted her eyes and seemed to be thinking about something, then asked: "Who is out there on duty today?"
"Thursday... it must be Mike and Toula."
"I wouldn't want to be in their shoes!"

"No, you're right," said Jack getting up, "he's hardly innocent."
"Well I hope he gets what he deserves" said Carol looking up at him, then commented: "You're off early!"
"Yeah, Thursday today, got to go and check all the computers are set up properly." He walked up to the sink and started rinsing out his cup. "I tell you what though," he turned back towards nobody in particular, "did anyone watch that programme about

interrupted her thoughts, "did I tell you that Mandeep's mum said that she was walking up to school the other day and she saw Roger stepping out of a car stopped in front of a driveway. And she said she saw him take one look at the car on the drive and then turn back inside his car and cheerfully say 'hey mum look, you're not supposed to park here' and by this stage Mandeep's mum was right next to the car and she saw Roger's mum go-" (Tina cupped one hand for cover and discreetly showed Helen an approximation of the rude one-finger gesture that she did not dare copy) "-and my heart just bled for Roger."
"It is sad, isn't it, no, you hadn't told me that, but it's not as if we don't know how he gets treated at home. Do you remember the morning when his mum brought him in and went up to Carol to say she wasn't at all well so she hadn't given him any breakfast?"
"Oh I remember, yes, Carol was saying that she didn't know how to respond to a mother who appears in impeccable make-up and hairstyle, 'not a hair out of place' she had said, and quite frankly owns up to neglecting her son, blaming it on her ill health."
"That was really sad. Anyway," said Helen picking up her cup from the coffee table, "I'd better head back. I need to pop to the loo and if I don't go now I'll have to wait until

"No, I wouldn't either! Imagine having to cope with all that on the hoof! Glad it wasn't me, I tell you! Actually," Barbara went on, overhearing Jack's question, "did you watch that programme? It was really good."
"Yeah, I did. I thought it was so clever of that supply teacher to catch it all on video. If she'd just described what went on, I'm sure nobody would have believed her."
"Or nobody would dare say they believed her, not on national telly anyway!"
"No, too right they wouldn't. Oh, before I forget, do you think we could finish that display in the Hall after school today?"
"Not today I can't, I've arranged to talk to Lesley about Ella so she can write her report."
"OK... how about tomorrow?"
"Yeah, tomorrow would be good actually, because beginning of next week I have my childminding darlings to pick up again."
"Oh yeah, I'd forgotten you're doing that!"
"Against my better judgement..."
"So how's it going?"

behaviour in schools last night?"
"Oh I did," said Mary, "and am I glad they made it! You know, people who think they know what it's like to be a teacher, are like childless adults who think they know what it's like to be a parent!"
"Too right!" laughed Jack heading for the door. "See ya!"

"Yeah, see you Jack" called out Mary and Carol.
"Do you know what I mean though?" continued Mary, "people just don't have a clue, do they?"
"Yes, in fact Roger today is just the point in question, isn't he? People out there think it's possible for just a couple of adults to police all those children in the playground."
"That's right," Mary picked up the baton of their relay of discontent, "and the LEA thinks it's all right to just dump children here without any support whatsoever and expect that the school will sort things out. It's just ridiculous!"
"I'm glad it wasn't me on playground duty today, I tell you!" Carol said with a smile.
"Do you know what I mean though?" Mary went on, "these days it's all: children have a

lunchtime."
"Oh I think I'll come too" said Tina picking her cup up and following Helen to the sink, "have you seen how little space there is to move in there, now that all the photocopier paper has arrived?" Helen laughed as she finished rinsing her cup: "To be honest I found it quite useful as extra shelf space this morning!" They both left their cups by the sink to dry and headed for the door. "See you all later" they called on their way out.

"Not bad, actually, not bad. You know, they're no trouble really and it brings a few more pennies in."
"Hey Babs," started Pam instantly lowering her voice "you know what you said earlier about Nearlocal Infants?"
"M-hmm..."
"What if you do end up going there? What's gonna happen to your childminding then?"
"I s'pose I'll have to start again over there, won't I? At least I'm registered now. Anyway, the bell is going to go any minute, we'd better get going."
They both got up and took their cups to the sink.

Lesley closed the last exercise book and stretched her arms up with a big yawn. She stood up, gathered all the books from the floor and, muttering "onwards and upwards", followed Pam and Barbara through the staff room door.

right to this, children have a right to that. What about the rights of teachers? Don't we have a right to not be physically or verbally abused by children?"
"Well, we all know what the bottom line is, don't we? Inclusion is all well and good, but it only works if children have full, additional LSA support."
"Yeah, it's just crazy to expect overstretched class teachers to cope with a full class and children with special needs. They need to give us proper time, proper training and proper money or else it will never work."
"Well, we all know it, don't we? Inclusion is a great idea if it's funded properly!" Carol sighed and shook her head with a smile at the voice of reason so often quoted to them, then continued: "Of course everybody wants the classroom and the world to be a universally inclusive place with equal access for everyone to everything. But when it really is just a money-saving exercise it's bound to be detrimental to everybody's learning!"
"Oh, it really gets me when people give you all the talk about principles and equal opportunities and what have you and you know full well that inclusion is

just not adequately resourced. It's just special education on the cheap!"
"Yeah... Nice, cosy theory. Rotten practice."
"And let's not forget who picks up the blame when things don't work out well... I have a lot of sympathy for that apple core man, you know. Schools are not what they used to be because children are not what they used to be." Mary was already slowly getting up, aware they were the only ones left in the staff room, when the school bell sounded.
"Goodness me, look at the time!" exclaimed Carol and the two teachers hurried out of the staff room.

Joint interpretation of findings

In July 2006 I contacted both Welcome Park and Friendlymead Infant schools seeking an opportunity to discuss research findings; this would keep participants in the picture and provide a means of validating my work. By that stage I had mostly explored reasons and extent of support for, as well as reservations towards, inclusion. Friendlymead Infant School felt unable to re-engage with this project but Welcome Park Infants invited me to their in-service day at the beginning of the autumn term.

Staff changes within the school meant that, in addition to the few staff members who had previously opted not to be interviewed, participating in this discussion was a senior member of staff who had not worked for the school when I was last there. What follows is a distilled version of the discussion that took place in September 2006; I have created this synopsis by limiting my representation to what I considered 'milestone' comments and keeping only some of the words used in them. In order to maintain anonymity, I have allocated participants alternative pseudonyms for this section. Names beginning with 'S' are senior teachers (Head, Deputy, SENCo), names beginning with 'C' are class teachers and names beginning with 'L' are Learning Support Assistants.

You all mentioned that you support inclusion in principle, but this ranged from pretty close to an unconditional statement to 'only for some children under certain conditions'; and if these are two ends of a spectrum, a number of positions such as "inclusion is good in principle but there are issues about how it's being implemented" would fall in between. There is quite a lot to untangle within that. But people also seem to support inclusion for different reasons: either from the point of view of the disabled child [or because] of potential benefits [for] children who would normally be in the mainstream school anyway. So, again, there's a lot of untangling of what people mean, when they talk about supporting inclusion in principle. How does all that sound so far?

Artemi

I think how a teacher views inclusion would probably depend on the school setting: the intake and the teacher's experience. You know, if you have a class with a lot of challenging behaviour and then you have a statemented child the teacher might be more hostile to inclusion.

Sharon

Thank you. I think you have put your finger on a very important point, and that was something that came up from the questionnaires that I sent to all schools: what people express as their overall view in principle is just *so* tied up with their personal experience of inclusion. Then again, you do not need a research project to tell you that. So thank you for that. Absolutely, where you draw your experiences from seems to have a lot to do with it.

Artemi

I feel that generally, from what you said, yeah I do talk to a lot of people and they all fit within the spectrum. But I think one of the common things that *everybody* who I've talked to agrees about, is just that there is a huge level of political hypocrisy, and whilst we are being kind of battered about our attitudes on inclusion and are they right or maybe they should be better and all the rest of it, the accusation most people make is that this is just simply about saving money, and moral blackmail. Around people not to even dare mention the fact that it is about saving money.

Christopher

And I have actually written down your phrase of 'moral blackmail', because, I mean I don't know how- what do other people feel about this?

Artemi

Well you don't feel that- it's not PC to say "I'm anti inclusion". You know, you're not allowed, as a teacher, to say "actually I think it's a really rubbish system and it doesn't work." And yet I think it was Warnock who brought it in [and she] has said that herself. Not that it is rubbish, but that we need to think about it again. But we are not allowed to say that the system doesn't work. Because it's not seen as constructive, it's not seen as being positive. And yet it's blatantly obvious to anyone that works in it that there is something not right.

Colleen

Yeah. I mean from talking to all of you guys and your colleagues in the other school, people have seemed quite careful about what they say. And yet when I talk to teachers about inclusion outside of this research context, for example during the interval of a concert, a different picture comes through. And that has struck me. Not that anybody is wanting or trying to be dishonest, but I wonder if the context in which we are having the conversation is perhaps limiting in what can be said?

Artemi

Short pause

You see some of us have been [abroad] where we've seen an example of how inclusion *does* work, because you've got a specifically built school that includes children. The whole school, the whole ethos of the school is around including children. And it is staffed appropriately. I know there is a huge tax cost but…

Steve

Yeah, it's hard here because even though some people have really good ideas we cannot always carry them through.

Laura

You see in terms of what people said, there is another issue that I would like to bring to your attention. I don't want to make anybody feel uncomfortable, this may well be everyday language in some schools, but some of the words people were using struck me quite early on. A number of people talked about children being "dumped" in mainstream schools. And I wondered if perhaps a child with an exceptional drawing ability came to a school without additional support, would people talk about them being "dumped" there?

Artemi

Well that's because the gifted and talented child will still be able to access the curriculum

Colleen

I think quite often how the LEA deal with children is that they just look to find a place. So you get a child and then you are trying to meet their needs and it's not working successfully so you go back to the LEA but they don't listen. So in effect they just- it's like the LEA have just said they are going to go there, that's fine. We've got rid of them now, *we* don't have to worry about them. The school has to cope with it.

Sharon

But possibly also we feel a bit, because we've been successful with including children, that we are now attracting more children that need to be included. Now that is good in lots of ways, but it does have the disadvantage of a hell of a lot of paperwork for [the SENCo]. And it becomes more of an administrative nightmare, doesn't it? And it's good to be recognised as inclusive and that you *can* cope with these children, but you become in a way of victim of your own success.

Steve

I like to think that any communication is a bit like a fraction: having a nominator and a denominator. And the nominator is what you hear [the actual words used], and the denominator is what is implied with the statement. So for this, for the denominator, I felt as if what might be implied is: 'this is a difficult issue for me and I'm not going to have enough support for it'. So I wonder if it might be something like this, captured into words like 'dumped' and 'thrown in'. Not that people do not want these children, but they do not want the context within which they arrive in their classroom. Would people [agree]?

Artemi

Pause

There are *some* nods... You were nodding more when I mentioned lack of support. Perhaps I have put more words in your mouth than you would like me to.

Artemi

Well it's not necessarily if we don't get any support, we're still going to do the best that we can for the children that arrive, so, you know, you have a child that arrives and they *do* need support. It might be three or four months until you actually work out *your* best route to give them the best support that they *need* within your classroom. Without actually having any extra money. So it's not that you don't want the children, it's finding out the right ways to meet their needs.

Sharon

Can we move on to something different? We've talked about the content of what was in the questionnaire and in our conversations, but there is also the issue of positioning, which has concerned me quite a lot. And again from what I have found out of talking to all of you guys and people in the other school, there is a huge range: from the people who come to talk to me knowing beforehand what they believe in and say it whether it's controversial or not; to the people maybe at the other end of the spectrum who maybe genuinely don't know what they think. And it has felt as if some people have almost tried not to position themselves and I hope I haven't been threatening, or the whole experience wasn't uncomfortable. But the level of engagement, the level of positioning has been quite variable. So I wondered what you might make of that. And I have some ideas but I'd love to hear from you.

Artemi

In my first year of teaching I felt very well supported and, you know, I had a statemented child but the support was more than enough. And to jump from that to this last year, having a very difficult class, it was very difficult. And my opinion in my first year might have been in support of inclusion, whereas this year I probably would have spoken quite differently (laughs).

Chloe

So, in the light of experience, you have amended your views. Thank you for sharing that. I'm sure people's views aren't cast in stone, [they] do change with time.

Artemi

Looking back at the very first question in the questionnaire, which invited people to position [themselves] in principle, about half of you didn't- either didn't answer that, I think there was one blank, and five chose the middle option, saying that either special or mainstream placements are equally as good. And that seemed to be giving a different picture to what people said to me face-to-face.

Artemi

Well maybe it's a bit ambiguous because it's depending on each child really.

Colleen

Absolutely. Thank you, there could be a number of reasons. You could argue that there are lots of faults with the question itself and I'd be the first to admit that it is almost an impossible question to answer anyway. But I'm just wondering what, you know, what other reasons there might be for somebody not positioning themselves or not wanting to share-

Artemi

Another thing is that I don't really know what a special school is like. And I think maybe we should all go and see what a special school is like.

Charlotte

nods and expressions of agreement

I think the biggest issue of when you can't cope with them in school is when you can't guarantee their safety or the safety of the other children. And this was the case with one boy we used to have here: two of his favourite things were cutting into electric cables with scissors and running away. Now whether a special school is the answer or not, I don't know, in this case I believe it was.

Steve

I think that's what's great about schools here, that you have a resource base on site.

Louise

I like your point about people maybe imagining that special schools are a tailor-made panacea for everything. And that's very much what has come up from the way people have spoken. So it's very interesting to hear, to actually hear it from you. Can I take you back now, to - well, those of you who were here at the time - reflect on that experience. I'm very interested to hear how it was for you, and I think I have an ethical responsibility to other people who I may do research with in the future. So I would like to know how much of a strain it was to have me around, to find half an hour to talk to me, whether there might have been any positive sides of that for you, those sorts of things.

Artemi

Well, Clare, you had the biggest involvement

Steve

I thought it was positive. You were an extra pair of hands in the classroom and I just found you really helpful.

Clare

Well thank you.

Artemi

The interview I found more stressful. At the end of a working day I don't know whether I have any thoughts of my own at all. And to actually put them into words, at that time, was quite hard because you've got so much in your head at the end of the day. So that felt a bit stressful.

Clare

I think it was also quite unusual for somebody to be interested in your views about something that is so controversial. And I think, you know, although we don't talk about inclusion really, it was actually really nice for us to have somebody coming in to see what we actually thought and to give us the opportunity to express our views really. And to be interested in actually what we had to say. So that was good.

Carmen

Yes, I thought it was good because it did make you think about things, like you say actually sit down for a space of time and think about that particular issue which during the day you don't because you just get on with it don't you? Yeah, I think it was good. It made *me* think a bit more about how you actually feel about it rather than that kind of- because it's quite emotional, a lot of the time isn't it, it's quite a gut reaction. And, you know, the idea is you go home and reflect but, it doesn't happen, does it really?

Colleen

I thought it was really nice of you to offer the time back.

Christopher

Oh, yeah! [Tomorrow] morning, nine o'clock?

Charlotte

Well that is all very good to hear, thank you. And what was it like- There was a period of time when I was in and out a lot, and I was talking to a lot of you within a space of a few weeks. Did that feel any different, where people talking about inclusion in the staff room more than you might have done otherwise?

Artemi

No, I don't think we did at all.

speaker unknown

We did talk about it when, like, Chris had an autistic boy in his class who came in with no support last year and I saw the strain on him. And I felt then really cross about it and we did talk quite a lot. Because you think, well that could be me. And it probably might be this year.

Charlotte

I think within your year group, you tend to talk about it more with your close colleagues. But we wouldn't talk about these things in the staff room because there [are] often parents and all sorts of people so you have to be very careful, you can't just walk in and start having a conversation. You don't know who might know whom, so…

Christopher

I think people do talk about children in their class a lot

Steve

many expressions of agreement

What, after talking to me?

Artemi

I think you ought to know as well how much it moves people and how many people sort of have breakdowns or are being in floods of tears.

Charlotte

laughter

I have subsequently felt tremendously guilty at making light of such a serious issue. Profound apologies to all practitioners.

So that then, if you've got a colleague who's got a problem then you *are* involved, aren't you? And I would say that staff are incredibly supportive of each other here. But even though people will say "oh, send him to me for the afternoon, I'll have him, give you a break" which is a really good thing to do, as a teacher you sometimes don't want to let go.

Charlotte

You feel really really supported, but you go into the classroom and you are just on your own. And it feels really really isolating and very strange. Because you do, everybody's really supportive, but actually at the end of the day, apart from sending them out which is quite hard for some of us to do (you feel you want to get to grips with it or deal with it), it's very isolating.

Colleen

If you could have an LSA dedicated to each class, then there would be another adult.

Sharon

Yes, because that is what I found last year, it was much easier. You know, you could say to someone "well what was that about?" You don't feel 'am I going mad or did that really happen?'

Colleen

You can get a pair of eyes and you can get a pair of hands.

Louise

Thank you for that. One final question to you all: It would be very helpful for my thesis if I could include two or three entire transcripts of our conversations. You know, within the thesis I'm taking extracts from here or there. But I now realise it would be good practice to include some entire transcripts, anonymised of course. So if any of you would like to consider that please let me know; but please don't feel you have to, because that is not something that we agreed at the outset.

Artemi

When can we read the whole thing?

Christopher

When she's done it, Chris!

Chloe

I'm hoping to have the whole thing submitted by the end of October. [sic!]

Artemi

Will we be able to read that then? I would like to see a copy.

Christopher

I will, of course, get the school a copy. And again I would be very pleased for anybody to read it and I would very much like people outside of the school to read it as well.

Artemi

And it *was* readable. I have to say, it really was. I loved the way you'd done that.

Charlotte,

referring to 'Literacy Session at Mara Santime Infant School'

Thank you. Well thank you all very much for your time, that was very helpful.

Artemi

Thank *you*. Nice start to the day. That's interesting. So, you're always welcome to come back. And now we move on to…

Steve

As staff were leaving the room, one teacher came up to me and thanked me for this work, saying that this *does* feel like their voice and that it is important for it to be heard.

In January 2007 I contacted the Headteachers of both schools again, this time offering an opportunity for staff to comment on the final draft before I submit my thesis. Welcome Park Infants requested two copies and, a week or so after receiving them, the Headteacher emailed to offer praise for my work, including: "Everyone who has read it is very positive about it and I haven't heard of any suggested alterations".

Conversation with Sophia: patchwork quilting **(Rationale for representation)**

"Thank you for inviting me along, I've really enjoyed this process." Sophia and I have been making a patchwork quilt and are hoping to sew on the last few squares of colourful material today.

"It has been my pleasure, thank you for coming." I pick up a needle and some red thread and choose a brightly coloured shape to sew on.

"I read your latest draft the other day," she begins to sew, *"and it's so unconventional it is almost provoking."*

"Is it? I certainly hope nobody confuses outcome with intentions" I surprise myself with the intensity in my voice. I draw in a slow, deep breath and remind myself that I am not alone in seeking alternative forms of representation: "The assumption that the languages of social science – propositional language and number – are the exclusive agents of meaning is becoming increasingly problematic, and as a result, we are exploring the potential of other forms of representation for illuminating the educational worlds we wish to understand" (Eisner, 1997: 4), before returning my attention to Sophia. "I mean, if my thesis is deemed unconventional that is probably because I chose not to feel constrained by the established academic mould. And if people find it provoking, that would have more to do with how they read it than how I wrote it. I most definitely did not set out with the intention of being either unconventional or provoking."

"So what did you set out to do?"

Reach people, communicate, talk to them, encourage them to engage with these issues; but how can I tell Sophia this, without reducing my passion to a cliché attached to every researcher's lips? I could tell her that I wanted to 'find a way to represent the heat', but she would not understand unless I gave her Eisner's full quote: "We report the temperature even when we are interested in the heat; we expect a reader to be able to transform the numbers representing the former into the experience that constitutes the latter. New forms of data representation signify our growing interest in inventing ways to represent the heat" (ibid: 7). Sophia is still waiting for a response so I try to retrace my steps and remember how I planned my thesis:

"To be honest, it is easier for me to tell you what I set out **not** to do. Right from the start I knew I wanted to avoid creating a monotonous monochromatic monologue, but had no idea what the finished product would look like. All I knew initially was that I wanted to write something that people would choose to read."

I consider how my Masters dissertation (Sakellariadis, 2003) had somewhat deviated from traditional forms of representation and how I have sustained a passionate commitment to creating engaging texts. It is at this point that I remember a discarded piece of writing and seize this opportunity to share it.

"You know, I had written a short paragraph on my choice of representation, but was not going to include it in my

thesis. Would you like to hear it?"

"Go on then" she gives me permission to use my voice, unaware of what voice this might be. I carefully put down my sewing, walk to the filing cabinet at the corner of the room and bend over to get some papers out of the bottom drawer. I stand up straight, search for the right page, then cough to clear my throat and begin to read, slowly, in as serious a voice as I can muster:

"From an array of potential styles of linguistic expression I have, after considerable deliberation, vulnerability consequent upon such deviation from traditional academic discourse not withstanding, opted to construct my doctoral thesis, present paragraph excepted, in a writing style perceived to be widely accessible, if not attractive, driven by an overwhelming desire for clarity and engagement, deriving from a powerful sense of responsibility towards both contributors to, and audience of, the aforementioned text. This I consider defensible on grounds not dissimilar to those determining that photographs or other works of art are best displayed behind clear, not tinted, glass: quintessentially aiming to eschew obfuscation."

"You always did have your very personal sense of humour" Sophia observes. Was that a suppressed giggle?

"Don't we all?" I reply, raising my eyebrows with a smile. I tidy those papers away and return to my sewing.

"Will you stop shifting the meaning of anything I say?" she protests. I do not miss this opportunity to taunt her.

"Anything anybody says should only convey a particular meaning, Sophia?"

"Don't you dare mention poststructuralism to me" she pretends to threaten, playfully throwing me a cotton reel.

"OK, I won't." I catch the reel. "But will, if I may, suggest that an element of ambiguity is unavoidable; rather than straining to fight it, I would encourage you to embrace it." I let the cotton reel drop on the quilt and it rolls away, leaving a long strand of loose thread in its trail. I remember Elliot Eisner's suggestion that "ambiguity may serve meaning, not detract from it" (Eisner, 1998: 10), as well as Robert Stake (2005: 453) referring to research reporting as a forum for pursuing clarity while tolerating ambiguity. On a more entertaining note, having recently read 'Seven types of ambiguity' (Perlman, 2005) I have grown to relish opportunities for both utilizing and exposing ambiguity. My doctoral thesis is replete with both.

We continue to sew in silence, each lost in our own thoughts, until I pluck up enough courage to ask her what she thought of my latest draft.

"Well it did seem a bit like trying to fit a gallon into a pint-sized pot. I enjoyed reading it, don't get me wrong. But one thing I still cannot understand is why you took up so much space to re-write the history of educational provision. Surely there must be other texts available that you could have referred to."

Not a good start, I silently reflect; I thought we had already been through this enough times.

"Is this because you think there is only one way to tell this story?" I want her to examine her assumptions.

"No, of course not; you can tell it any way you like but at the end of the day there is only one history! Cut and dried."

Sophia keeps her eyes on her sewing; she seems to be working faster and tugging at her thread a bit harder.

"The thing is, even if we agreed to see all events as indisputably 'facts', who do you think should decide which are relevant and significant enough to be included in a history, and on what grounds? If you and I were to write a history of our school, would we both be telling the same story?"

Sophia tugs at her thread so hard that it breaks. She sighs, pushes a wisp of hair away from her eyes and rethreads her needle. I don't like the tension hanging over us. I am reminded of Catherine Belsey's distinction between deconstruction and critique (2002: 80) and wonder if Sophia is perceiving the latter as I try to engage with the former. I try again, remembering that Derrick Armstrong has recently criticized the absence of disabled people's voices from special education policy analysis and suggested that "Historical analysis needs

to take these voices seriously for they challenge both the homogeneity of experience and the social relations that have constructed difference as 'abnormal'" (Armstrong, 2003: 116).

"You see, I wanted to construct a text which clearly presents relevant developments through time, as any history would, but which also includes examples of how these impacted upon the lived experience of others, particularly those who may have felt marginalised, *and* also includes significant comments or speculations relating to these developments. If we want writing to represent thinking, why make writing linear when thinking is not?"

Sophia continues to sew silently; so silently that I wonder if she is engaging with this at all.

"So anyway, to cut a long story short, the idea of text boxes then came as the most practical way to represent such a multi-voiced text. It seemed a perfect way of keeping the main thread of historical developments easily accessible, while presenting all other text within a frame indicative of the voice it represents. I chose text borders that appeared relevant to content type: plain for describing developments, film-like for others' lived experience, people for others' comments and pinned notes for my own thoughts. This, plus what consistency of layout I could afford, should enable readers to decide on their entry point on each page."

Sophia carries on sewing silently, slower now. She secures her thread, picks up another piece of material and rethreads her needle, discarding a long piece of leftover thread.

"Well this does make very good sense, actually. In which case, why not keep it up for your entire thesis?" she asks.

"Why did you just throw all that black thread away?" My question seems to take her by surprise.

"Can't you see? This material is so light-coloured I couldn't possibly sew it on with black thread. It needs something much lighter." I look up at her and smile. She gazes at me inquisitively, presumably both surprised at needing to state the obvious and waiting for me to answer her question. Then her expression suddenly changes and she breaks out into loud laughter, finally realising she has answered her own question. I laugh with her, dispelling any tension from our earlier misunderstanding.

"Good one, Artemi" she says wiping a tear from her eye.

Sophia seems lost in thought for a while after our laughter has died down. Eventually she asks:

"But don't you think that including fictional writing is taking it a step too far?"

"Far from it; no pun intended. Unless of course you consider fiction to be entirely divorced from our lived experience."

"How do you mean?"

"Let me give you an example. A few days ago my daughter finished reading 'To kill a Mockingbird' (Lee, 1960) and asked me if it was a 'true story'. Thinking she is a bit young to be challenged with deconstructing dichotomies

about true and false or fact and fiction, I simply asked her to clarify what she wanted to know: is a 'true story', for her, one in which the actual characters were once 'real' people and the events described have 'really' taken place, or one where the culture of a time and a place 'really' existed in the way the story portrays it?"

"And what did she say?"

"She thought about it for a while and concluded it is probably the latter. What would *you* say?"

"I would need to think about it. Anyway, we are not talking about literary enterprise here, we are talking about Science. Social Science." She seems to be implying that the stories I have constructed are firmly rooted in the world of fantasy. I bite my lip before answering and take a few moments to thread my needle. The words of Bochner and Ellis (1998: 8) are ringing loud in my mind: they have referred to social research as "an institutionalized form of life that too often has inhibited creativity, promoted conformity, and retarded change in prevailing conventions." But to quote this to Sophia now would probably make her disengage from this conversation.

"And what creates the need for social science to be reported in its conventional format, do you think?"

She throws me a quick, puzzled look, as if I have asked her what her name is, then sighs and says:

"The fact that you are meant to be communicating knowledge, not o-pi-ni-on." I take a deep breath, sensing that I am losing her. How can I help her understand my view that detailed descriptions constitute a relatively poor medium for conveying experience? After all, both fictional pieces in this thesis arose out of the realisation that, as my role of observer merged with that of supporter of children's learning during my time in Rachel's class, my experience opened up new channels for generating meaning from participants' words. The best way to share this seemed to be to create an experience, albeit an artificial one, for readers to engage with. I consider asking Sophia whether communication of knowledge necessarily implies 'imparting' and 'receiving' or whether she could see a research text as creating opportunities to generate insights. "In other words, a fictional text is not to be taken as imparting knowledge about reality but as raising questions about reality, through the unresolved plurality of its meanings" (Campbell, 2000: 84). I approach this obliquely.

"I will try and explain, but I need you to listen."

"I am all ears" she says with her eyes glued on her sewing.

"You are absolutely right; a research text is about sharing knowledge. But there are different ways of seeing 'knowledge' and I suspect you see it a bit like a fixed structure 'out there' which we gradually turn more and more spotlights on, as we progressively 'grasp' more of it, as our knowledge of the world increases. Mine is a more

humble view of knowledge: I see it as an internal mental construct which we all continuously shape in our own minds. For example, this very minute you may be reshaping your understanding of what it means to know something." I have already digressed from my intention and now find myself wanting to quote her Eisner (1997) commending Bruner's (1986) distinction between paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing (quoted in Campbell, 2000: 86).

"I agree that there are different ways of knowing, but right now we are talking about Scientific Knowledge."

"OK, so what does scientific knowledge look like, to you?" Perhaps I should have quoted Peter Clough saying "research in the social sciences will find in its theatres of inquiry only what it puts there" (Clough, 2002: 84).

"Young, tall and handsome and dressed in a smart suit. Come off it, Artemi, it doesn't look like anything, it just is. It is solid knowledge, arrived at through rigorous investigation, which strives to refer to the world as it really is, OK?"

We seem to be on different ontological universes but now is not the time to address this. I choose to respond to her implication that knowledge gained through traditional research methods is superior to that gained through innovative qualitative methodologies.

"I hope you are not assuming that non-conventional research is any less rigorous by default. Perhaps we can at least agree that when any researcher reports on their work, they are putting forward their understanding of

their data. Would you see this as more solid if it came from researchers employing more conventional research methods?" I know that if she gets to question her assumptions she may feel as though I am pulling the carpet under her feet, but I could not leave her faith in numbers unchallenged. Convention's endorsement may have restrained her from questioning the relationship between research data and people's lived experience. I wonder how she might respond to Sarah Whatmore's proposition that "the idea of data as something solid to go on" can be "seductive" (Whatmore, 2003: 89).

"I can see what you are saying," Sophia says after a long pause, *"but still find it difficult to trust someone else's understanding."*

"Well I guess that is why I think conscientious researchers should strive for methodological transparency. For example, what I am saying here today, in other words what we are both saying, stems from regular reading and thinking as well as observing reservations of others over the past three years."

"You've lost me there."

"Don't worry, that was mostly for the ears of others listening in to our conversation. So, anyway, are you saying that you can see my point but, at least for now, you miss the aroma of truth even though you agree that rational thinking renders this little more than a mental construct?"

"The aroma of truth!" she inhales with a smile as if taking in the scent, *"Yes, I suppose I'll miss it. What are you laughing at?"* I cannot help finding this terribly amusing.

"You will miss, what, exactly?" I tease her affectionately.

"The aroma of truth. And if you find that funny, let me remind you it is your expression you are mocking."

"I am sorry, I didn't mean to upset you. It's just that mine is a symbolic language. It sounds strange coming from you just as we are discussing your preference for dry, propositional language of research."

"Oh, now, don't tell me that an Academic Text should be subject to the same norms as everyday language!" She puts her sewing down so hastily that she temporarily loses her needle. I grab the bull by the horns this time.

"Well, why not?" This seems to have overwhelmed her and so, rather than discussing where to draw the line, if one needs drawing at all, I shift the focus on impact on the reader. "Don't you think researchers care about how many people read their writing? Otherwise, why bother printing it in the first place? Would you prefer to read a monotonous monologue or something more engaging? As a writer I, for one, would choose to engage with my audience."

"Never mind what I prefer reading for pleasure. When it comes to Academic Texts I think there are some Standards that need to be maintained. If you take Traditional Representation away you are lowering these Standards."

"I beg to differ. If nothing else, I do not consider tradition beyond challenge by virtue of its longevity."

"You may well beg to differ. But you still haven't exactly answered my original comment, that fictional representation is a bit too much."

"No I haven't, I am sorry. We keep taking our conversation to different places. Well let me do that now. For a start, although the genre is relatively new, it has been around for some years. Andrew Sparkes (2002: 149-189) offers numerous examples of how it has been employed by a range of social scientists and Peter Clough (2002) has firmly established it within educational research. In their introduction to the 'Handbook of Qualitative Research', Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 18-19) refer to a 'Crisis of Representation' in the social sciences. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005: 959-978) explore this further; Laurel Richardson describes how, in the late 20th century, "the relationships between social scientific writing and literary writing grew in complexity. The presumed solid demarcation between 'fact' and 'fiction' and between 'true' and 'imagined' were blurred" (ibid, 2005: 960)." I want to go on and tell Sophia how Laurel Richardson asserts that "one major difference that separates fiction writing

from science writing [is] not whether the text really is fiction or nonfiction; rather, the difference is the claim that the author makes for the text. Declaring that one's work is fiction is a different rhetorical move than declaring that one's work is social science" (ibid, 2005: 961). I decide against it, so as not to overload her with new thinking.

"But why engage with a genre that detracts from the truthfulness of your knowledge claims?" she persists. I am not sure that it does, but choose not to pursue this and respond to the question of why use fictional representation.

"In a nutshell because it is an engaging and powerful means of representing the complexity of lived experience, potentially the only means of representing some of its richness; besides, it has the potential to keep all voices simultaneously alive and can evade compromising anonymity and avoid interpretive closure. It can generate evocative texts and has the advantage of being able to show, rather than tell." I stop short of referring to the Epilogue of my thesis as an example of showing, rather then merely describing, a teacher's level of engagement in discussing inclusion; neither Sophia nor you, the reader, have seen this yet and in any case it is not an example of fictional writing. I take a deep breath and continue:

"And I know I am not alone in thinking all this. For example, in a book devoted to the role of fiction in social research, Stephen Banks commends the value of "a more immediate and authentic contact with my reading

audiences" (Banks & Banks, 1998: 12), Michelle Miller explains her turn to dramatically scripted narratives "to achieve a multivocality for reporting what I have come to understand about my participants' understandings" (Miller, 1998: 69) and Robert Krizek proposes "that ethnographers employ the literary devices of creative writing - yes, even fiction - to develop a sense of dialogue and co-presence with the reader. In other words, bring the reader along with us into the specific setting as a participant and co-discoverer instead of the passive recipient of a descriptive monologue" (Krizek, 1998: 93). Elsewhere, Ruthellen Josselson (1996: 7) suggests that "a metaphor or a fiction might open a door that cannot be opened by approaches that are too weighted down by duty to literal truth". Would you like to hear more?"

"I am not sure I can take much more. But there is one thing that you said in your nutshell statement which you have not revisited. What did you mean about anonymity in fictional representation?"

"Oh yes, it is this thought of mine that, in traditional research texts, complete anonymity may not be possible. For example, if I report on responses from interviewees in one school, my best efforts at anonymising extracts are likely to fail in the eyes of staff in that school; in other words, as people can recognise one another from their manner of speech alone, anonymity seems to break down potentially where it matters the most. Conventional

research seems to shrug its shoulders at this, asserting that meticulous anonymising is the best a researcher can do. Well, I find that fictional representation eliminates this problem. I can quote what people have said without giving rise to suspicious stares in the staffroom."

At this point I pause my conversation with Sophia and briefly address you, the reader. In the above passage I could have included some reference to relevant literature (for example Campbell (2000: 83) asserting that "the fictionalising of settings and characters differs [from teacher biographies and teachers' stories] in that it allowed disguise of people and places and maximum confidentiality for participants"), which could serve to maintain research convention as well as to strengthen my argument. "Reporting of other people's words, especially those who perhaps have some special expertise or status, is a common rhetorical technique for supporting one's own arguments" (Mercer, 2000: 84-5). And, I would add, perhaps a convention with too firm a grip on research tradition for comfort; I have just used it again. It seems to beg the question: if I am to consider an audience intelligent enough to engage with my argument and assume a position in relation to it, what purpose might a quote *repeating* my argument serve? Might at least some such 'reinforcements' not be considered disrespectful to a writer's ability to present an argument, a reader's ability to process it, or both?

Hoping you will forgive my indulgence in an opportunity to respectfully rattle the cage of research convention, let us now return to Sophia still waiting to respond to my comment of the previous paragraph.

"Is that what you have done then?" Sophia asks.

"I hope you realize I cannot possibly answer 'yes' without destroying such a venture. But I can certainly tell you that much of what staff of Mara Santime Infant School say with regard to inclusion is very closely related to interview transcripts and questionnaire responses as well as personal experience."

"Oh, that reminds me; wherever did you get the idea for such a strange name for a school?" She clearly hasn't noticed.

"Mara Santime Infant School? It's only an anagram of A Mainstream Infant School."

"Trust you! And are your characters fictional or real people inside out and back to front as well?" We both laugh.

"As you probably know, my thinking does not sustain a clear dichotomy between 'real' and 'fictional'. The characters are fictional, in that they are constructs of my imagination, and they are also real, in that they are based on people whom I either met during the course of this research or knew from previous experience. In keeping with a tradition established by others..."

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, sorry. In keeping with a tradition established by others (Campbell, 2000; Clough, 2002) the characters I created are amalgams of a number of 'real' people, in a way that readers may recognize aspects of themselves or their colleagues but nobody whom I know should be able to recognize themselves in their entirety. And, to save you asking, the plot for 'Literacy Session' came from an observation of many years ago and that of 'Morning Break' was one I constructed for this story." I stop short of asking her if she would consider it more real if, unbeknown to us, a similar incident has already taken place in a school or if it may occur in the future.

"Perhaps we shouldn't dwell on this much longer" I suggest, feeling fictional representation of research coming out of our ears. As I reach over for another piece of material to sew on the quilt I notice an edge of the previous piece needs sewing in.

"Didn't you say you were going to tell me about fictional representation beyond social science research?"

"Oh yes, I almost forgot. I was going to tell you about John Suchet publishing a fictionalised biography of Beethoven" (Suchet, 1996).

"Good heavens, why on earth would anyone dare to intrude upon history like that?"

"Well that's it, you see, he has and he hasn't. He says: "In a curious way, by writing the story as fiction - as long as you stick to the known facts, which I have - you can take the reader closer to the man himself. Instead of

writing, for instance, that in 1803 Beethoven composed the symphony that was to become the Eroica - as you would in a formal biography - in a novel you have to be in the room with Beethoven. Where was he living? Where was he sitting when he wrote those two famous opening chords? Was there a carafe of wine on the table? Who else was in the room with him?" (Suchet, 2006b)."

"Are you really saying that in order to create an engaging text it is OK to include arbitrary details and sell it as real?"

"What I am saying is that research in areas beyond social science is also responding to a perceived need for alternative forms of representation. And, for what it's worth, I am also saying that I find both this representation and the rationale behind it very convincing."

"But how can we know if he got everything right?"

"Isn't that a question we should be asking all historians? Anyway, when John Suchet was asked this, here is what he had to say about the credibility of his fictionalisation: "I can only point to the research I carried out. But you can never be entirely sure. In the 1940's a whole series of letters Beethoven wrote to a woman he was in love with forced a rethink by scholars of that relationship. Who knows what letters might today be in private hands somewhere in the world? I just hope that one day - hopefully many years from now - when I pass on and enter the

pearly gates, I'll find him waiting for me and I'll ask him, "Well, Ludwig, did I get it right?" I won't expect him to nod and say yes. I just want him to say: "You got closer to the truth than anyone"" (Suchet, 2006a)."

"Mmm" muses Sophia as she discards the thread left on her needle.

As I sense the conversation about to move on, it dawns on me that I have barely touched upon what I see as the essence of narrative's richness, be it fiction or not, and at the heart of its persuasive pull: the subtle, if not raw, energy of the metaphor. Painfully aware that an eleventh hour stab at it is likely to be poor, I settle for letting this go and resign myself to have missed the boat. (Almost.) Sophia and I each pick a new piece of material and, as we rethread our needles, I notice that she is once again using the threader while I return to squinting and struggling.

"Isn't it funny how we all have our own way of doing things?" I say more to myself than to her.

"Do you mean 'we' as in 'everybody' or 'we' as in 'you and me'? What is so funny this time?"

"It is the way you said 'you and me' Sophia. I am sorry to have to remind you, but you *are* me. Literally. Doesn't it strike you as odd that this whole conversation is entirely scripted by me?"

"No, not at all" she replies with a mischievous smile. *"In fact, I would like you to tell me a bit more about me."*

"OK, what would you like to know?"

"I don't know, how come you invited me along, for a start."

"Goodness, for all sorts of reasons. Because I enjoy your company and value your point of view, because I find a dialogue more engaging than a monologue and because you happened to be around before I even knew I wanted someone to talk to: I had written something else as a dialogue and found it worked well." And there is, of course, the additional reason of affording myself dual response opportunities, such as this one.

"So this was your idea, was it?"

"Well yes, inasmuch as anyone can claim any idea to be entirely their own. What I mean is: ideas don't emerge out of a vacuum but out of our lived experience, yet the links are not always obvious. So, for example, I know that reading about Gargoyles and the Narrative Gaze (Speedy, 2006) has served to open up representation possibilities in my mind. As has, for that matter, catching a chance glimpse of Dave Bainton's experimental writing in landscape format (unpublished doctoral thesis)."

"Fair enough. But why all the walking? Couldn't we have simply sat down and talked over a cup of tea?"

"I don't think it would have been the same. That would have emanated a rather static image, whereas I wanted to portray the transient nature of our conversations and-" I take a moment before saying this, conscious that my

thinking may get steamrollered by any attempt to articulate it "and perhaps the impossibility of capturing and scrutinizing lived experience." I secure my thread and pick another piece to sew on the quilt.

"Ha! No wonder you took me to the river to discuss accessing the thoughts of others!" We both laugh; she reaches out for her next piece of material and adds: *"Are you going to tell your readers whether we were going up or down that spiral stairway? I found the thought about a shared vision one of the most important ones in your thesis."*

"Didn't I say I was out of breath by the end?" I say threading my needle, still unsure if that was wishful thinking.

"Besides," I return to answering her earlier question on walking, "I rather like the peripatetic resemblance with the Socratic dialogues and with his method of dialogic inquiry in an insatiable quest for meaning."

"What has that got to do with a spiral stairway?" she asks visibly perplexed.

"Oh, never mind" I dismiss the topic, "I hope you enjoyed our walks anyway."

"I certainly did. And our talks too, for that matter. But why have you given me this strange typescript?" she asks as if she could see her representation on the page.

"Because a distinct font for each of us, a bit like our distinct voice, should make it clear which one of us is talking at any one time, without me needing to keep clarifying who said what."

"Oh, I see… And you thought of that?"

"No teasing, please! Yes I did, but it's such a simple idea I am sure others must have thought of it too."

Sophia smiles and continues to look for a thread to match the colours of the material she is holding. She settles for a dark burgundy and threads her needle.

"But you haven't given me a distinct voice, have you?"

I almost prick my finger at the sound of her challenge. She is right and we both know it; I should have seen this coming. Then I notice the shift in meaning.

"Ah, but you are now taking 'voice' to mean something different, aren't you? I was talking about *sound* and now you are referring to *content* of speech."

Sophia carries on sewing, knowing that I will come to answering her question.

"To be honest, initially I wanted you to be the voice of wisdom, hence your name." I catch her eye as she looks up from the quilt; I smile, then secure my thread and pick up another piece of material.

"Sophia, the Greek word for wisdom? I am honoured!"

I choose some dark blue thread, then change my mind and pick a lighter shade.

"But then I realised that if you were to help me make a point, sometimes I needed you to challenge me from different standpoints, including from some more conservative or inflexible positions." I begin sewing the next square onto our quilt.

"Charming, thanks!" She reaches out for another square and pretends she is going to throw it at me, then picks up her needle and returns to her sewing.

"It's really taking shape, isn't it?" she asks as she rounds off her stitching. I am not sure if she is referring to our patchwork quilt or my thesis; they are both almost finished.

"Yes, it is," I agree in either case and, hoping to understand what she had in mind, ask "do you like it?"

"Sure, I think it's great!" she replies lifting her gaze from the quilt to me. *"Don't you?"*

"Yes, I think I do." I may not have been so tentative if I was sure what we are talking about. Sophia gives me a long, puzzled look, probably confused by my hesitation, then shakes her head and secures her thread.

"There," she says, *"all done!"* She cuts off her thread, puts her needle in the sewing box and prepares to leave.

"I'll just finish off this last piece" I say tugging at my thread and get up to see her out.

I return to my quilt for one last time, having bid Sophia farewell, and look at it affectionately. I reflect upon the enormity of the task from vague idea to completion and on the care with which each piece has individually been sewn in place. Over the past few months I have made this quilt my own and I have made it on my own. Gone are the days when I was impatient to embroider material I had not yet woven; at long last I am about to wrap myself in its comfort. I pick up my needle and begin to darn in my initials.

SUMMARY

Like a number of similar projects before it, this research suggests that mainstream primary school staff support inclusion in principle but have reservations about the way it is currently being implemented. Potentially not in itself a very disturbing finding, unless perhaps seen in the context of its longevity.

This research indicates that practitioners support inclusion in principle, albeit for diverse reasons - some focus on entitlements of disabled children while others on the benefits which diversity brings to non-disabled children - and with varying intensity, while many have strong reservations with regard to funding, level and quality of support, training, resources and strategic planning of inclusive education. Positive experiences seem to strengthen support for inclusion while distressing events seem to foreground reservations, leaving some practitioners feeling that fundamental entitlements of their own are being transgressed in the name of pursuing fundamental entitlements of disabled children. What seems a necessary challenge to some, may be seen as unjustified pressure by others. Short of a sense of agency, many practitioners feel under pressure not to voice their concerns, succumbing perhaps to a perception of a powerful normalizing gaze. The educational terrain seems to evolve from a pastiche of diverse standpoints including those of practitioners, some of whom may feel at the crossroads of impossible agendas: being judged on the quality of inclusive provision for disabled learners as well as on the academic achievement of all pupils. Seeing inclusion as a human rights question to which education is called upon to find an answer, I propose the application of "kaleidoscopic understanding", appraising a position in relation to the standpoint from which it is being held, in order to disrupt polarized positions and promote wider awareness of seemingly competing perspectives.

Finally, this research highlights a reciprocal relationship between lived experience and meaning-making. Personal perspectives, developing through cerebral and/or emotive processes often in the absence of time for due consideration, seem to contribute towards shaping lived experience which, in turn, feeds into personal perspectives.

EPILOGUE – STRINGS CONCERT CONVERSATION (or: "Uuugh")

Two months or so before my submission deadline, I was attending a strings concert at my daughter's school. "Excuse me, are you Artemi?" I heard a voice behind me as the music teachers were rearranging stands in preparation for year 4 violas to play. I turned around; a familiar face, but where did I know him from?

On seeing my puzzled look he quickly reminded me his name and how we had met: he was the reception class teacher of a young girl with communication difficulties I had supported at Nursery; we had met a few years ago as part of the routine process of 'supporting transition to mainstream', an integral part of my job at the time as member of the LEA's Early Years Team. There was only time for the briefest 'how are you?' conversation before the music began again.

As I listened to 'the hippopotamus song', my mind travelled back to his school and our initial meeting the summer before Olivia[1] had started in his class. I vividly remembered his apprehension, if not opposition, at the thought of having a child with communication difficulties in his class. Perhaps I had mentioned 'Asperger's

[1] Not her real name

Syndrome' and he had tuned in more to the label than my description of Olivia, I can't remember for sure. I do know that when I had followed this up in the Autumn Term, she had settled in well and he was very happy with how things were going.

At the next lull of a few minutes, this time to prepare for year 4 violins, I asked him how that whole year had been with Olivia in his class. "Oh fine, fine" he said. We went on to talk about what we are doing now; he told me he has moved on to another primary school where he is Deputy Head and I told him about quitting that job and doing my doctoral research. Our conversation was interrupted again when the sounds of 'Edelweiss', or a close approximation, filled the school hall.

On my lap was a small pile of papers and booklets that I had chosen as the day's reading. Most of it I had read during Zoe's violin lesson earlier in the day and had hoped to get through the rest during the strings concert. Now a different opportunity was opening up. This entire research project has been about understanding the viewpoint of school staff and here was a golden opportunity to seek a teacher's views in a context conducive to an honest, uncensored response. The reading would just have to wait.

At the next break of a few minutes, this time to bring back the chairs and lower the stands for year 5 cellos, I turned back to him and said I would be really interested to know what he thinks, because my research project has been looking at mainstream staff views of inclusion. I picked up one of the articles I had on my lap, showed him the title: "Does segregated education have a role to play in the twenty-first century?" and asked him what he would say to that. "How do you mean? In what way?" he asked. "In other words", I once again threw open the familiar question, "what do you make of inclusion?" His response was as immediate as it was telling: "Uuugh!" he sighed as he buried his face in his hands. I waited a few seconds before asking: "Does that say it all?" He looked up and smiled. "When it works well," he started on a response I feel most familiar with, "when it works well and it is well resourced, and when people have the time to put in to it, it's fine. But much of the time it's just a cost-cutting exercise." The context conducive to an honest, uncensored response made me smile and tell him how many times I've heard this before. In his current school, he went to say, they have a number of children with quite severe needs. Wondering whether his sense of 'severe needs' is the same as mine, I asked "When you say quite severe needs...?" "Oh, quite a range," he replied, "for example we have one boy who... well he shouldn't really *be* in this school, he has severe autism and is not really communicating with anyone, he should really be in a school that is specifically set up to cater for his needs. With us he does have support, very committed support, someone who has supported him for many years,

maybe too long, and is almost like a mother-figure to him. And we have another child who-" The young musicians had already started on the next piece but he didn't seem to have noticed. I put my hand out in a tentative hang-on-a-second gesture and pointed to the players.

While listening to the next piece, I couldn't help marvelling at the observation that someone with so evident reservations to at least some aspects of inclusion can become so engaged in conversation about it. I wondered whether at the end of this piece he would choose to return to this conversation or if his thoughts might have moved on to something else.

He leaned forward while we were still applauding the year 5 cellists. "You see we have another child in school," he carried on from exactly where he had left, "who has cerebral palsy and is in a wheelchair and cannot access the curriculum but socially is fine, so she is benefiting from this placement. Interestingly, a while ago we had a boy who suffered from Down's Syndrome who was very much wrongly placed and eventually he did leave to go to a special school, but even that wasn't appropriate for him, it was just the only school that could offer him a place, not one that was set up to cater for his specific needs. But his parents had really wanted him to be in mainstream and you know I sometimes think parents are given too much choice

these days, they have their own agendas and their own aspirations for their child but they are not there every day to see how their child doesn't fit in and if their choice is coloured by their wish for their child to be like all the other children perhaps they are not best placed to make that choice." He smiled and added, after a short pause: "I know this is not a politically correct thing to say." "Yes, but it's *your* views I want to hear," I reassured him, "I know what the politically correct version is and don't need to hear that again. It is *your* views that interest me."

Our conversation carried on over another couple of musical interludes or so. Conscious I could not hold much more in my head, I asked if he would mind me taking a few notes and using his views in my research; he said that would be fine. Before leaving, we established a means of communication and I asked if he would cast his eye over my writing up of this conversation, to ensure he can see himself in my representation. The following day I forwarded to him this piece of writing, with a note explaining I had deliberately changed details of gender and diagnoses and asked if he feels this renders him sufficiently anonymous. I also asked if he recognises himself in this text or if he feels I have put words in his mouth. A few days later I received my writing back, including an A4 side of handwritten comments. He said:

Artemi – the text of this is fine - in fact if you don't go back to the day job you could always become a full-time writer! Just a few more thoughts that you can add/adapt as you so wish:

- The principle of inclusion is the right one yet the way schools are organised and financed at present often means it doesn't work as well as it should – the class teachers do not have enough training or knowledge to accurately meet the needs of the included child – class teaching is a very difficult job with many pressures and to have to consider the inclusion dimension (in severe cases) is very difficult – no-one gives the class teacher anywhere near enough time or support to be able to include the child effectively.

- Teaching Assistants supporting the included child do a fantastic job – but once again lack of knowledge, support and time means that they are swimming against the tide - they need proper liaison time with the class teacher and experts in the field who can diagnose needs and plan programmes for children.

- Inclusion is making the government feel good about themselves and hoodwink the public into thinking that they care - unless they really come to it with finance and resources (training and otherwise) it will never work as well as it could. As a society we need to decide how much inclusion matters and how much we want to make it work. Like many issues - the environment, world poverty, the health service etc - it's easy for people to say they care and are concerned - it is far less easy to actually pay for it and give up something yourself.

- Despite all of this there are many people out there who are doing an excellent job at including pupils the best way that they can, because these children deserve the best.

Good to see you again - if you need any more information either e-mail [including address] or phone [including number]

I e-mailed thanking him for volunteering yet more interesting thoughts and asking if I could include the entire text as an epilogue to my thesis. To my delight, he said I could use as much of this as I wanted.

Appendices

Appendices appear in ‘portrait’ orientation, as they represent documents created and used in this format.

APPENDIX A - Extract from Quality Framework Executive Summary

The entire summary document can be accessed at:
http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/evaluating_policy/quality_framework/exec-summ.asp

The framework (Chapters 2 and 7)

The framework is based around:-

Four guiding principles - that research should be

- **contributory** in advancing wider knowledge or understanding
- **defensible in design** by providing a research strategy which can address the evaluation questions posed
- **rigorous in conduct** through the systematic and transparent collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data
- **credible in claim** through offering well-founded and plausible arguments about the significance of the data generated

eighteen appraisal questions

1. How credible are the findings?
2. How has knowledge or understanding been extended by the research?
3. How well does the evaluation address its original aims and purpose?
4. How well is the scope for drawing wider inference explained?
5. How clear is the basis of evaluative appraisal?
6. How defensible is the research design?
7. How well defended are the sample design/target selection of cases/documents?
8. How well is the eventual sample composition and coverage described?
9. How well was the data collection carried out?
10. How well has the approach to and formulation of analysis been conveyed?
11. How well are the contexts of data sources retained and portrayed?
12. How well has diversity of perspective and content been explored?
13. How well has detail, depth and complexity (i.e. richness) of the data been conveyed?
14. How clear are the links between data, interpretation and conclusions - i.e how well can the route to any conclusions be seen?
15. How clear and coherent is the reporting?
16. How clear are the assumptions/theoretical perspectives/values that have shaped the form and output of the evaluation?
17. What evidence is there of attention to ethical issues?
18. How adequately has the research process been documented?

quality indicators

- for each appraisal question, a series of possible features for consideration in the assessment of quality are proposed.

APPENDIX B – Doctoral Mother: a performance text on balancing the commitments of a doctoral student and mother

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A. M. OTHER[1]

Sunday 25 June

"Can I have a cuddle please mummy?" Zoe asks at the end of our evening meal. "Yes, of course you can" I immediately reply, painfully aware that she had asked again ***before*** *dinner and I had inconsiderately said "not now, I'm working". She comes to sit on my lap and we talk about school camp, where she is due to go tomorrow for a week. When I try to get up to help Chris clear the table, she says "no, not yet" so she stays on my lap and we talk some more. Daphne and Phoebe, her older sisters, tell her more from their experience of school camp. "Xxxx was* ***so*** *annoying, misbehaving all the time, I get really fed up with attention seekers", remarks one of her sisters. "I know it can feel annoying," I try to distil some tolerance in my children, "but try and see things from* ***their*** *point of view: usually people who seek attention are those who* ***need*** *attention. Some children don't feel they have enough attention from their parents, so they sometimes act in extreme ways, to get attention from other people." "Well it's still annoying, and I'm still fed up with them" concludes my daughter. The irony of what I have just said hits me, but it seems I have escaped lightly. On my third attempt to get up from the table, Zoe still resists, casually slapping my pedagogic initiative back on my face. "No mummy. You need to spend more time with us and this is the perfect way to do it."*

Monday 26 June

The day begins with somewhat frantic double-checking that everything is packed and labelled, a fruitless final hunt for the additional suncream and big farewell cuddles among sisters. I snatch a quick cuddle too, knowing Zoe will not want one later in public view, then drive her to school while Chris takes Daphne and Phoebe to their *school. As I stand on the pavement with all the other parents and sense a delay building up, the wait sparks off a battle between the mother and the researcher within me. On the one hand I want time to stand still, the smiling faces inside the coach windows to be here forever; on the other hand I want the coaches to move on, to go, to take the smiling faces to their exciting adventure so I can get myself to my course on time.* Today I am booked on a course on NVivo, a data management software package, which I hope will help with my qualitative analysis. The prospect of analysing hundreds of pages of interview transcripts seems rather overwhelming, if my practical tools are confined to paper, scissors, post-it notes and coloured pens. It

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[1] I presented this paper at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) Pre-Conference on 12 September 2006 as a performance text. I had sewn two sets of clothes together and presented one side of me as doctoral student and the other as mother, while positioning myself to face the audience with the side relevant to what I was reading. This is indicated in the written text with *blue and italics for mother*, black for doctoral student and maroon and Arial font for both together. During my presentation I read this paper against the backdrop of a PowerPoint series of photographs from both research and family life and while Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to the film 'The Mission' was playing. I regret not to have recorded this so as to include it as a video paper.

seems NVivo provides a virtual version of these tools, making qualitative analysis infinitely easier to manage. *The sound of the coach engines starting jolts me back into the present. A few seconds of intense waving and heart-wrenching and then they're off. Gone. That's it, they've gone. [pause] Well, on to my course then! As I sprint to the car I take a mental snapshot and smile at the sight: the mass of waving parents is swiftly transforming into dozens of individuals scattering towards parked cars and hastily setting off in all directions.*

The training is not terribly well organised, but NVivo itself proves to offer exactly the sort of electronic support I had hoped for. The course overruns, which means I have to miss the last session in order to pick up Daphne and Phoebe from school. Back at home I want to get straight to work and take my laptop to my bedroom, so the girls can use the study without disturbing me. Zoe doesn't need taking to guides today, so we can all eat something simple a bit later than normal. Or Chris might be able to get dinner when he comes home from work. My first job is to transform all of my interview transcripts into Rich Text Format so I can import them into NVivo. To my horror, I realize they are not all fully anonymised, so I set off to do that first. After a while I am aware of Phoebe coming into the room, taking something, or leaving something, then walking out again, but manage to remain focused on my work; she stops at the door and says *"It needs sewing, mum". Instantly I re-emerge in the present with a massive pang of guilt: my daughter brought to my sewing box the cardigan she has been telling me for a week that needs mending, and I have been too consumed in my work to even acknowledge her presence... I look up at her and smile: "Sorry darling, I will do it, as soon as I can" "OK. Can you help me with my 'cello practice please?" She has a grade 5 exam next month and I help her with sight-reading and aural practice, sometimes with her scales and pieces too. "Yes, of course I can. Give me 15 minutes and I'll be right with you." I dart out to buy a roasted chicken, stopping on the way to pop a postcard to Zoe in the letterbox (and then realising there is no evening collection from this box; oh, how terrible, she won't receive anything from me until Wednesday now) and return to help Phoebe with cello practice before a rather late dinner. It's not the same without Zoe; it really feels strange to have just two children at home. Well at least no need for violin practice this week. Zoe has her grade 2 exam next month. Not that I do much practising with her, I must admit; but at least I'll have a break from feeling that I ought to be helping her more...*

Tuesday 27 June

I get straight down to work as soon as Chris and the girls leave the house in the morning. It is wonderful to have my own time start as early as quarter to eight; normally it is nearer half eight by the time Zoe leaves to walk to *her* school. This camp week is an interesting taster of what it will be like next year, when she will join her sisters in secondary school. I return to the necessary job of anonymising

transcripts and soon realise I need to log out of my e-mail if I want to stay focused on this work. *The phone rings mid-morning, putting a temporary end to all intentions of finishing anonymising today. I am Chair of Governors at Zoe's school and, as I have not responded to the e-mail the Clerk sent first thing this morning, she is ringing to bring an urgent matter to my attention: a union representative has written to me asking to postpone an important meeting scheduled for next week; a response is needed at once, as we feel the meeting should go ahead, so I drop my work and write a difficult letter straight away. I try to return to anonymising in the afternoon, but there is another telephone interruption, this time about planning a celebration on the last day of term to mark the end of primary school for all children in Year 6 – another half hour gone. As a researcher, clearly I should not have dealt with the call there and then. But as a mother, I could never forgive myself if I hadn't. Zoe is in Year 6 and I want to do my best to help make this event a success. Whoever said that mothers own their time while their children are at school? (Whoever said that mothers own their time while their children are at school?) There is little chance of catching up with my work today: After collecting Daphne and Phoebe from their school, I leave them at home and go to a committee meeting at Zoe's school. Phoebe protests: "Oh, do you have to go mum?" "I'm afraid I do, this is a really important meeting" (not that there is ever a meeting that is not important, but today a small committee is going to discuss proposals to expand the school.) Phoebe tries to disarm me: "What can be more important than your own children?" She has hit me where it hurts and she knows it, but I manage to come up with: "Nothing is more important than my own children. But if I always chose to be with the most important thing in my life, nothing else would ever get done. Sometimes I have to give my attention to things that are less important than you." I arrive at the meeting with just seconds to spare, having left a note for Chris to please improvise something for dinner.*

Having prepared dinner, Chris ends up having to clear up too, as I go round to baby-sit for my neighbours. Looking after a baby and a toddler takes me back a few years (how on earth did I ever cope with a baby and two toddlers?) and I am reminded that at this age things are a lot more clear-cut: while you are looking after so young children, your time is totally devoted to them; but once you have put them to bed, you own your time. No background noise of piano or strings practice, no interruptions (or hardly any). Just you and what you have chosen to do. In peace and quiet. Wonderful! By 8:00 o' clock I am sat down with a cup of tea, drafting my presentation for the ECER Conference in Geneva. I have decided to present the messiness within 'a week in the life of a doctoral student who is also a mother and sets herself very high standards in both roles'. It has always bugged me that research tends to look polished and straightforward when reported. Occasionally people report that 'at times it was a messy process'; but it is still a polished report. I will try to expose the messy process and invite people to have an honest conversation about precisely this: the challenge of balancing competing agendas... I could even

resurrect an old idea of dressing in two halves, to try and bring both mother and researcher identities to life. Better than sitting down and delivering a PowerPoint presentation, I hope to embody and convey my lived experience; to *share* it with my audience, rather than simply try to describe it. I could have Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to "The Mission" playing in the background. I know nothing about the film, but the title - The Mission - sounds appropriate enough. Ideas keep popping into my head and I manage to capture some on paper while probably losing others. By the end of the evening I have a clear list of issues to highlight and detailed diary notes on this week so far, intending to peg my presentation on the day-to-day normality of this week. I even managed to take a break and catch up with Wimbledon. It dawns on me that, even though I find it hard to combine the roles of student researcher and mother- Correction: even though my perception of a good doctoral student and a good mother are both unrealistic, each needing 100% of my time, it dawns on me that at least they are potentially compatible. This may not be so for professional women tennis-players.

Wednesday 28 June

This morning I have to take Phoebe to an orthodontist's appointment. In the waiting room we fill some forms together and, when Phoebe opens her book, I get out a Clifford Geertz paper that I have brought to read. The consultation goes well: no need for braces at this stage, we discuss levels of severity and payment issues and agree to review again in six months. I scribble some notes before I forget what was said. No disrespect to Clifford Geertz whatsoever but, in the circumstances, the best place to scribble my notes is the back page of his paper. Phoebe had hoped that she would be out of school until lunchtime; on another day we might have done that, but today I have to go to a meeting so I take her back to school mid-morning. There is an identities project meeting today, which we have earmarked to discuss motherhood. This is a group of staff and doctoral students interested in exploring issues of identity, and committed to engaging in collaborative writing. It is my interest in the impact of motherhood on one's identity that brought me to this project and that dictates that this is a meeting not to be missed. This is the one thing that I do, that brings my identities as a mother and a doctoral student together. How ironic, then, that I had to forego the opportunity of some quality time with Phoebe, in order to get to a meeting to discuss motherhood... (How ironic, that I had to forego the opportunity of some quality time with Phoebe, in order to get to a meeting to discuss motherhood...)

On the way home from the meeting I notice a text message on my mobile. "Hi mum, I just climbed a really high rock called wolf rock! Don't text back because this is Mr Smith's mobile. From Zoe." What a wonderful surprise, given that the school has banned children from taking their mobile phones to camp. Thank you Mr Smith, a parent volunteer, I must remember to thank you when you are back. What a lovely

picture to hold on to: Zoe on top of a rock, on top of the world! I send Zoe another postcard, which she should receive tomorrow; I tell her that I will not write again but that I can't wait to see her on Friday. **I manage to more or less finish anonymising the interview transcripts** *before shooting off to collect Daphne and Phoebe from school.*

In the evening the girls and I have a game of Monopoly, while Chris does the ironing. We get talking about Daphne's birthday party next week and I realise I still haven't booked a DJ. I all but melt with guilt; she decided last weekend that she wants a disco party, why haven't I tried to book a DJ yet??? I make a few phone calls but cannot find anybody available at such short notice; in the end Daphne decides that she and her friends will organise the music for her party. I worry about how that will pan out in practice, at the same time as trying to convince myself that I should trust her to take responsibility for such things; she is, after all, about to turn 14.

Thursday 29 June

Today I wake up at five and manage to squeeze in a good couple of hours' work before the others are up; I have a non-work commitment and need to 'buy myself' the time to go. *Zoe's school are having their 'Healthy Schools' Audit today and I need to be there as Chair of Governors. Is everybody's life as complicated as this, I wonder, or do I overload myself more than others? Most people talk of their lives being busy, but how busy is busy? Are others weathered jugglers that take on more challenges in their stride, or do most people have fewer balls to keep in the air? This could generate an interesting discussion in Geneva. As for me, I had always enjoyed jogging through life, as others chose anything from crawling to darting through theirs; but nowadays it feels as though I am being chased through mine and it isn't much fun. It's the middle of June and I'm way behind with my work. How am I ever going to manage to submit my thesis? Goodness me, it's not the middle, it's the end of June...*

Friday 30 June

I wake up early again but stay in bed, setting my mind loose on concurrent journeys: exploring interesting ideas on thesis format, plans for Daphne's birthday party, thoughts about the forthcoming governing body meeting. Once again, I have forgotten to bring pen & paper at my bedside. I walk downstairs and sit at the kitchen table trying to capture at least some of these thoughts on paper. Chris comes down and starts clearing up the sink from last night, offering a running commentary on his actions as I try not to let that distract me; he might as well clear them now, he tells the plates and bowls, or else he'll find them all still there when he gets home from work. I pause from my writing and look up. "Will you clear up your venom as well," I joke, "or are you going to leave it lying there for me all day?" We

both laugh. He is right to nag though; I have hardly done any housework in the past few weeks. We both know that I "work from home", but I sometimes think I see the emphasis on 'work' and he sees it on 'home'. As Sheila recently said, when you both work full-time, you both need a wife at home.

I have a hugely productive morning, writing uninterrupted until lunchtime. Why cannot all days be so good? For once, my time is spent just how I had always imagined doing a doctorate would be: having time to explore interesting issues; to read, to think and to write about them. Bliss! On a day like this, I would unreservedly recommend to *any*body that they should do a doctorate! *In the afternoon I make time to cook a fish pie, as a special treat for Zoe coming home. I notice the mess we have all learnt to live with and manage to do a bit of hoovering before needing to collect Daphne and Phoebe from school. "Can I hoover in your rooms please?" I ask them soon after we get home. "No, please go away mummy; can't you see we are playing? Go and write your thesis."*

A short while later I set off to collect Zoe, making sure I am at school well before the coaches arrive. I am so excited that the moment has come, thrilled at the prospect of claiming my daughter back. Zoe is one of the first children to get off the coach and my love for her suddenly overwhelms me. For a split second I feel anxious that she may not want a cuddle in public, but I needn't have worried: she falls into my arms and we hold each other tight for what seems like an eternity. I close my eyes and rest my head on hers. Others around us all but disappear from my consciousness; I am vaguely aware of happy background noise. Zoe and I keep holding each other tight and I want time to stand still and for this moment to never end...

Tuesday 12 September

I stand before a scholarly audience and openly challenge my performance as a doctoral student. Am I out of my mind? What makes me do this? Honest integrity? Foolish honesty? (Honest integrity? Foolish honesty?) Will people *take* this as an honest account? Will I manage to convince them that, even though this did not actually all happen in one calendar week, it *has* all happened and is an honest account of my lived experience? Or will they, swayed by an unconventional topic and unconventional presentation style, be sceptical about its authenticity? I certainly hope this generates some interesting discussion. Hmmm... Will I find out that Mr or Mrs Perfect are in the audience? Will they volunteer to tell me how easy they find it to juggle a large number of commitments and be highly effective in all their roles? Perhaps Mr or Mrs Vulnerable are here, sitting behind a mask of confidence. Will they smile and nod understandingly as I expose my own vulnerability or will they choose to keep their mask of confidence on? Will people mock perceived naivety, or will they applaud honesty and innovation? Let's see...

APPENDIX C1 – Pilot Questionnaire

MAINSTREAM PRIMARY STAFF VIEWS

Please take a few moments to consider your stance on the issue of schooling for disabled children (i.e. whether you think that in principle most disabled children should attend special or mainstream schools).

1. Please indicate which of the following statements is closest to your views (tick one box only):

   ☐ I think **special** schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this

   ☐ I think **special** schooling is best for most disabled children

   ☐ I think most disabled children would benefit equally from either type of schooling

   ☐ I think **mainstream** schooling is best for most disabled children

   ☐ I think **mainstream** schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this

2. Please explain your thinking behind the above choice. When considering the education of a disabled child,
   a) what do you see as the main advantages of **special** schooling? (Please state up to three)

.....

.....

.....

   b) what do you see as the main advantages of **mainstream** schooling? (Please state up to three)

.....

.....

.....

3. Primary school staff are often very busy, with a variety of issues competing for their attention.
   How often do you think about the issues in the above questions? (please circle one number only)

never									every day
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Please mention any encounters with disability that have felt significant for you. These may be work-related c may include examples such as a friend or relative with a disability, a biography or other book, a news item, documentary or any other influential experience. (Please feel free to continue overleaf)

.....

.....

5. Please tell us how many years you have worked in the following roles: LSA / TA:..... Class Teacher: .....
   SENCO:..... Deputy Headteacher:..... Headteacher:..... Other (please specify):.....
   ✯ Please indicate dual role by placing additional responsibility in brackets; e.g. Class Teacher: 12; SENCO: (4)

6. Finally, please tell us about your current role in this school (please circle all that apply):
   Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher / SENCO / Class teacher / LSA or TA / other (please specify): .....
   ✯ Please remember that all responses, including names of schools, will be reported anonymously.

If you wish to make any further comments please do so overleaf. Thank you for completing this questionnaire Please seal it in the envelope provided and hand to the designated member of staff by **14 May 2004**. Many thanks!

Pilot School P57393

APPENDIX C2 – Study Questionnaire

MAINSTREAM PRIMARY STAFF VIEWS

Please take a few moments to consider your stance on the issue of schooling for disabled children (i.e. whether you think that in principle most disabled children should attend special or mainstream schools).

Please remember that in this project the term 'disabled children' refers to any child whose educational provision calls for arrangements over and above those ordinarily made in mainstream schools for the majority of children; some people prefer the term 'children with special educational needs'.

1. Please indicate which of the following statements is closest to your views *(please tick one box only)*:

- ☐ I think **special** schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this.
- ☐ I think **special** schooling is best for most disabled children.
- ☐ I think most disabled children can benefit equally from **either** special or mainstream schooling.
- ☐ I think **mainstream** schooling is best for most disabled children.
- ☐ I think **mainstream** schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this.

2. Please explain your thinking behind the above choice. When considering the education of a disabled child,

a) what do you see as the main advantages of **special** schooling? *(Please state up to three)*

.....

.....

.....

b) what do you see as the main advantages of **mainstream** schooling? *(Please state up to three)*

.....

.....

.....

3. Primary school staff are often very busy, with a variety of issues competing for their attention. How often do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of including disabled children in mainstream schools?

rarely or never	occasionally	often	every day
☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please mention any encounters with disability that have felt significant for you and briefly state how each has affected you. (*These may be work-related or you may cite a friend or relative with a disability, a biography or other book, news item, documentary or any other influential experience; please feel free to continue overleaf)*

.....

.....

.....

5. Finally, please tell us a bit more about yourself:

a) Are you: male ☐ female ☐

b) How many years you have worked in Primary schools? .....

c) What is your current role in this school? *(Please circle all that apply)*

Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher / SENCO / Class teacher / LSA or TA / other (please specify): .....

★ *Please remember that all responses, including names of schools, will be reported anonymously.*

If you wish to make any further comments please do so overleaf. Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please seal it in the envelope provided and hand to the designated member of staff by **[date].** Many thanks!

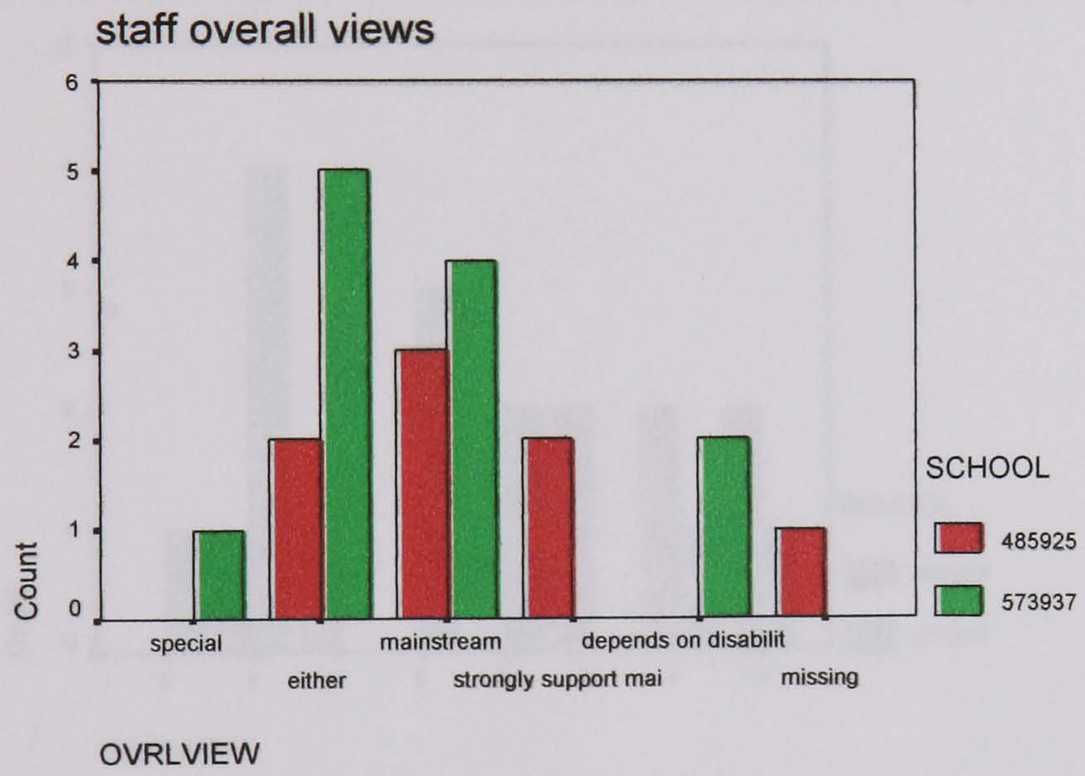
[school code]

APPENDIX C3 – Pilot Survey Reports

STAFF VIEWS ON SCHOOLING FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
RESPONSES FROM REDROOFS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Twenty-five questionnaires were sent to the school, of which eight[1] were returned; this is consistent with response rates from other mainstream primary schools. Attempting to portray a school view based on these responses would be misleading, as these cannot be deemed to represent the views of all staff. A description of these responses appears below, intended solely to serve as feedback to the participating school.

Participants were asked to select a statement which best described their overall view of schooling for disabled children. Two respondents subscribed to the view that most disabled children would benefit equally from either special or mainstream schooling. Three respondents thought that mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children and two indicated a view that mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children and they go out of their way to support this. One respondent selected two statements with contradictory meanings[2] and this response has been recorded as missing. The following bar chart represents the overall views of the eight respondents from Redroofs Primary (in red) and another pilot school (in green).



Participants were then asked to explain their thinking behind their choice of overall view, and were invited to put forward up to three advantages of each type of schooling. These can be summarised as follows:

With regard to special schooling, most respondents (7 staff) mentioned some aspect of funding among the main advantages of special schools, each citing one or more of the following: four respondents specified physical resources, five identified human resources, i.e. specialist staff and/or therapists, while another five specifically cited higher staff:pupil ratios; one respondent mentioned better funding, without any further clarification. Further advantages of special schools were identified as offering a discreet curriculum (4 responses), constituting an additional resource / alleviating pressure from mainstream schools (one response) and social benefits for disabled children (1 response).

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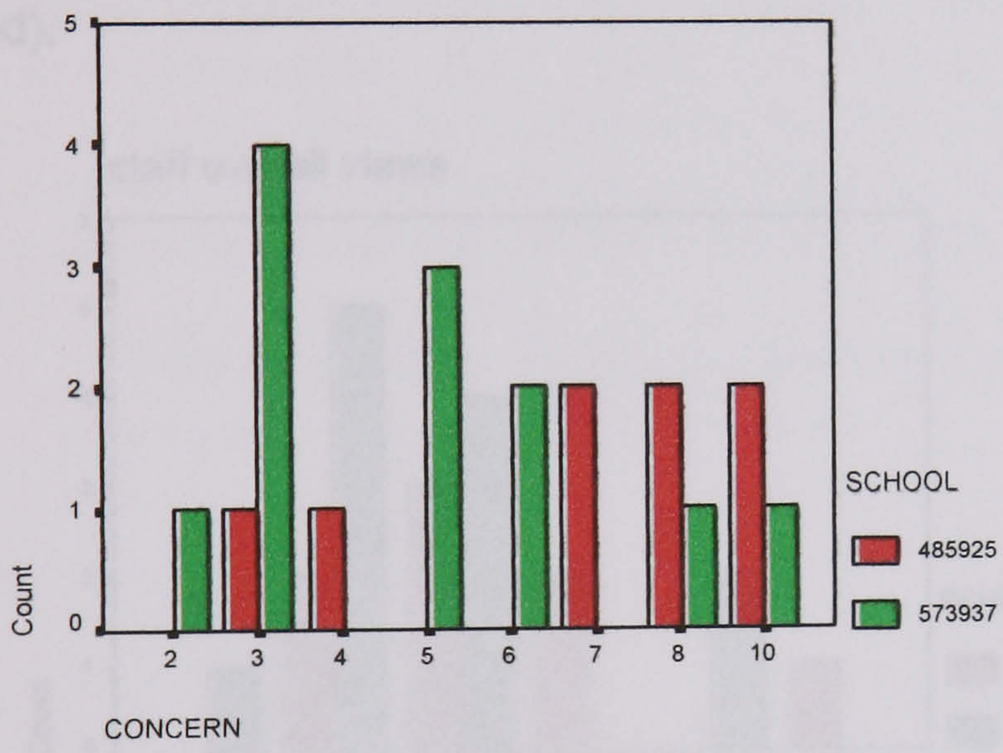
[1] These responses came from seven teaching and one non-teaching members of staff, of whom two have up to 5 years' experience, and six 6-10 years' experience.

[2] The statements "I think **special** schooling is best for most disabled children and I go out of my way to support this" and "I think **mainstream** schooling is best for most disabled children" were both selected.

With regard to advantages of mainstream schooling for disabled children, five respondents expressed a belief that this is how things ought to be in principle (citing, for example, valuing and celebrating diversity or acknowledging everybody's need to feel accepted in their local community); five respondents mentioned social interaction with their peers as an advantage (although it was not always clear whether this was seen as a benefit to the disabled children or their non-disabled peers, or indeed if the advantage to disabled children would be due to the acquisition of skills or the feeling of belonging). Further, four respondents mentioned other advantages for disabled children, for example proximity to home or access to a broad and balanced curriculum and higher expectations, and two respondents cited advantages for the non-disabled children, for example that they "learn how to interact".

Participants were then asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 (never) to 10 (every day), how often they think about such issues, i.e. the advantages and disadvantages of including disabled children in mainstream schools. Responses varied from 3 to 10 and are depicted in the following bar chart (Here, too, Redroofs appears in red and another pilot school in green). It is important to remember that the figures quoted represent the subjective estimation of each individual, and there is no basis for assuming that two people quoting the same figure actually spend the same amount of time considering these issues.

time to consider issues, as reported by individual members of staff



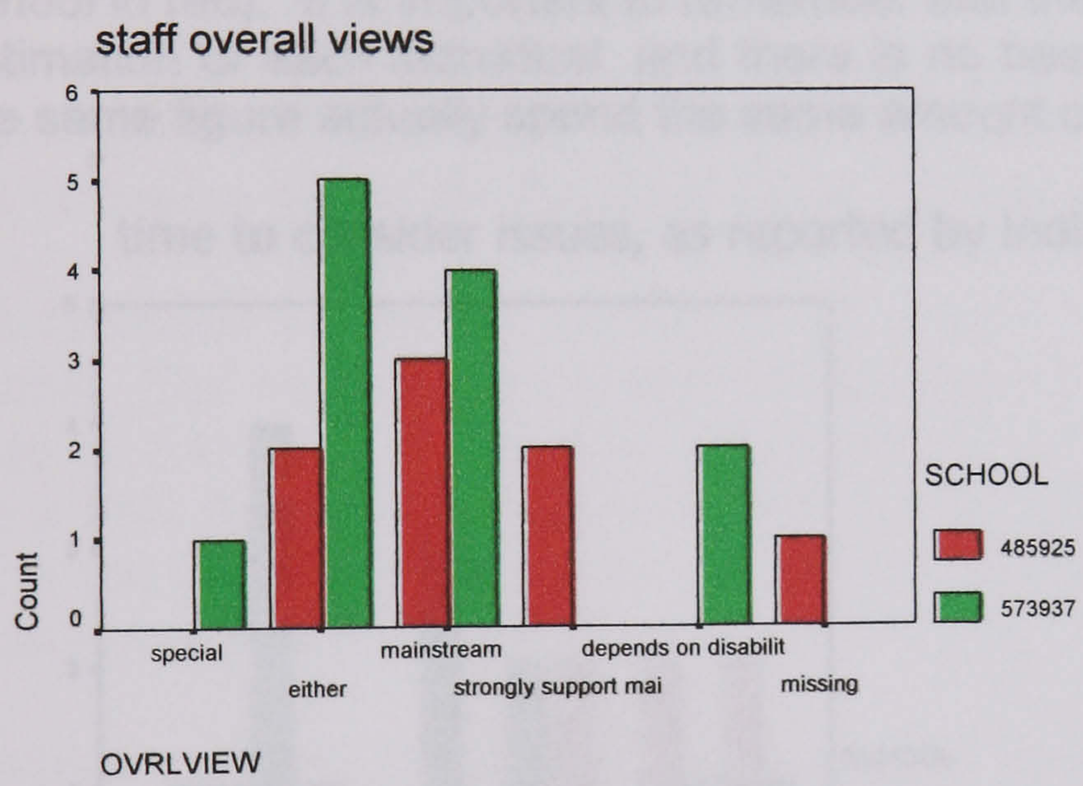
Finally, participants were asked to mention their encounters with disability that have felt most significant. Six respondents answered this question, all of whom cited work-related experiences; in addition, three respondents also cited experiences outside school life (for example acquaintances or an interesting book). Of the work-related experiences, four were clearly put forward as positive ones; one member of staff commenting on the school's resource base said "Whereas previously I found it hard to imagine how children with severe needs could be successfully integrated in mainstream, I now believe that this can not only be achieved but is also often preferable."

The scale of the pilot study has been too small for any attempt to be made in investigating links between different aspects of the above information. This will be carried out when results of the main survey are analysed.

STAFF VIEWS ON SCHOOLING FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
RESPONSES FROM EVERGREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thirty-seven questionnaires were sent to the school, of which twelve[3] were returned; this is consistent with response rates from other mainstream primary schools. Attempting to portray a school view based on these responses would be misleading, as these cannot be deemed to represent the views of all staff. A description of these responses appears below, intended solely to serve as feedback to the participating school.

Participants were asked to select a statement which best described their overall view of schooling for disabled children. Five respondents (41.7%) subscribed to the view that most disabled children would benefit equally from either special or mainstream schooling. Four respondents (33.3%) thought that mainstream schooling is best for most disabled children and one (8.3%) that special schooling is best for most disabled children. Two respondents (16.6%) felt unable to answer this question directly, but noted that such a choice would depend on the nature of the disability. They both remarked that some disabilities may quite easily be accommodated within a mainstream school whereas others could put a burden on both the teacher and the whole class, rendering mainstream schooling "grossly inappropriate". The following bar chart represents the overall views of the twelve respondents from The Evergreen Primary (in green) and another pilot school (in red).



Participants were then asked to explain their thinking behind their choice of overall view, and were invited to put forward up to three advantages of each type of schooling. These can be summarised as follows:

With regard to special schooling, most respondents (9 staff; 75%) mentioned some aspect of funding among the main advantages of special schools, each citing one or two of the following: six respondents (50%) specified physical resources, another six (50%) identified human resources, i.e. specialist staff and/or therapists, while five respondents (41.7%) specifically cited higher staff:pupil ratios; a further two (16.6%) mentioned better funding, without any further clarification. (N.B. These percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents gave more than one reason each) Further advantages of special

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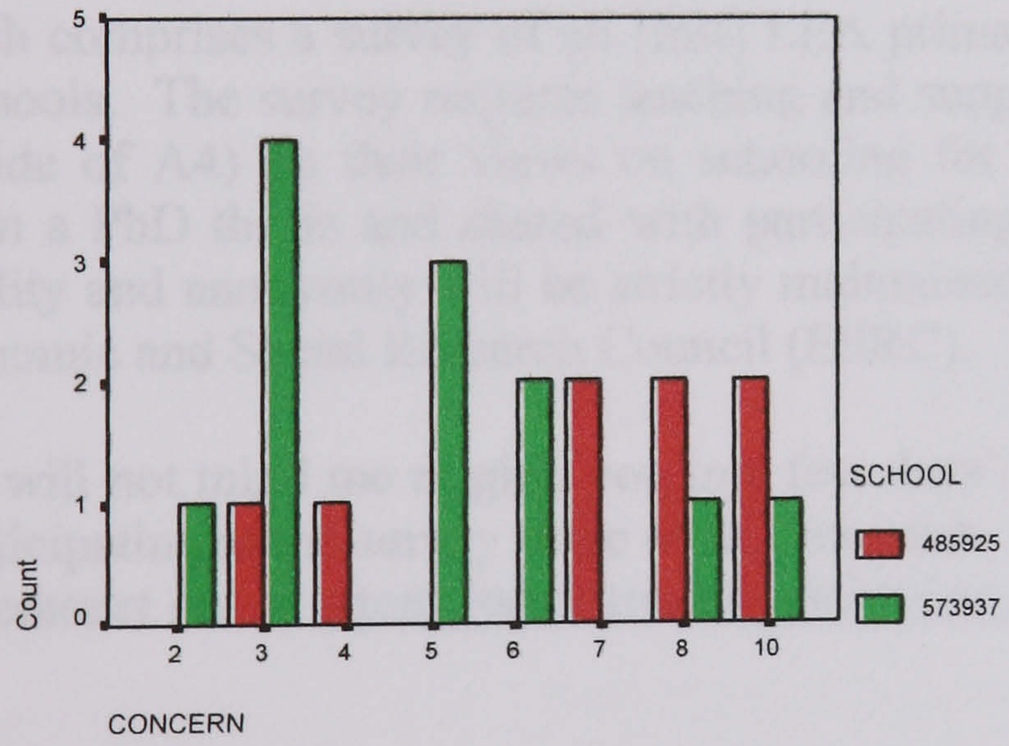
[3] These responses came from ten teaching and two non-teaching members of staff, of whom four have up to 5 years' experience, two 6-10 years, three 11-20 years and three 21-30 years' experience.

schools were identified as constituting an additional resource / alleviating pressure from mainstream schools (5 responses, 41.7%), a discreet curriculum (4 responses, 33.3%) and social benefits for disabled children (1 response, 8.3%). Finally, one respondent (8.3%) did not put forward any advantages of special schools.

With regard to advantages of mainstream schooling for disabled children, seven respondents (58.3%) expressed a belief that this is how things ought to be in principle (citing, for example, equality of opportunity, everybody's need to feel accepted in their local community, or a need for schools to be a true reflection of society); six respondents (50%) mentioned social interaction with their peers as an advantage (although it was not always clear whether this was seen as a benefit to the disabled children or their non-disabled peers, or indeed if the advantage to disabled children would be due to the acquisition of skills or the feeling of belonging). Further, four respondents (33.3%) mentioned other advantages for disabled children, for example proximity to home or access to a broad and balanced curriculum, and five respondents (41.7%) cited advantages for the non-disabled children, for example that they "develop empathy, understanding, respect and knowledge". (N.B. Here, too, percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents gave more than one answer each.)

Participants were then asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 (never) to 10 (every day), how often they think about such issues, i.e. the advantages and disadvantages of including disabled children in mainstream schools. Responses varied from 2 to 10 and are depicted in the following bar chart (Here, too, The Evergreen appears in green and another pilot school in red). It is important to remember that the figures quoted represent the subjective estimation of each individual, and there is no basis for assuming that two people quoting the same figure actually spend the same amount of time considering these issues.

time to consider issues, as reported by individual members of staff



Finally, participants were asked to mention their encounters with disability that have felt significant. Eight respondents (68.7%) answered this question; five (41.7% of total) cited work-related experiences and three (25% of total) experiences outside school life (for example acquaintances or an interesting book). Of the work-related experiences two were clearly put forward as positive ones and two as negative. In a number of instances respondents included illuminating details of events as well as of the impact these have had upon them, including shaping subsequent views.

The scale of the pilot study has been too small for any attempt to be made in investigating links between different aspects of the above information. This will be carried out when results of the main survey are analysed.

APPENDIX C4 – Initial letter to Headteachers

University of BRISTOL

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Fax +44 (0)117 922 5563
Ed-PhD@Bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/ph

Date: June 2004

[Name]
Headteacher
name of school
address
postcode

Dear [name of Head Teacher]

I am writing with the support of the Equalities and Inclusion Manager for [this] LEA, to request [name of school]'s participation in a local research project on inclusion. This unprecedented inquiry seeks to give a voice to every member of staff and to share findings with the LEA; these, I am told, will be used to inform the development of inclusive policy and practice in [name of LEA].

The research comprises a survey of all [this] LEA primary schools and, at a later stage, interviews in some schools. The survey requires teaching and support staff to complete a short questionnaire (just one side of A4) on their views on schooling for disabled children. Findings will also be published in a PhD thesis and shared with participating schools through dissemination seminars; confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained at all times. The entire project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

I hope you will not mind me ringing you in a few days' time to discuss the possibility of [name of school] participating at the survey stage of this research. Please feel free to write to me at the above address or contact me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk, should there be any issues you want to discuss.

Many thanks in anticipation of your time and support for this project. I look forward to speaking to you soon.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis (Mrs)
MPhil/PhD student

Checkmate on access

First SATs then sports day and REPORTS,
concerts to organize;
teachers on top of daily tasks
have work up to their eyes.

So if you'd thought the summer term
in primary schools relaxing,
do think again; for it could be
the time of year most taxing.

* * *

An absence form for Mrs Smith,
Inhaler puffs for Jane
At last a chance to type some notes
Oh no, the 'phone *again*!

"Hello this is The Busy School
how may I help you please?"
"Hello" I say and seek the Head
prepared to beg on knees

"What is this call about?" she asks.
I know there can't be cheating
The dreaded word 'research' is said
"Sorry, she's in a meeting"

* * *

Got rid of salesman on the 'phone
Just one deep breath she took
Oh no, one more incoming call
(must take it off the hook)

"Hello this is The Active School
how may I help you please?"
"Hello" I say and seek the Head
prepared to beg on knees

I mention the research and add
"It is about inclusion"
"Not a priority for us"
(Please spare us the intrusion)

* * *

Linchpin and Cerberus in one
a microcosm protect
And artfully screen off the ones
With whom I could connect

Ah! The *frustration* with each call
Contrasting points of view
(It's rude to by-pass and e-mail;
must work out something new)

* * *

She filed a uniform request
and cleaned up a grazed knee,
then back to dinner money sums;
but it was not to be.

"Hello this is The Lively School
how may I help you please?"
"Hello" I smile and give my name
wanting to sound at ease

This time when asked I stress the point:
It's *staff views* on inclusion
The LEA is interested
(this is a *just* intrusion)

"Hold on I'll just see if he's free"
my optimism now greater
"I'm sorry but he's busy now;
perhaps he'll call you later"

* * *

One hundred schools, three hundred calls,
five days spent on the phone.
Felt welcome here, unwanted there
facing each school alone.

Many seemed right away intent
to bar communication;
How sad; I think my work could help
but needed explanation.

APPENDIX C6 – Survey letter for each participant

University of BRISTOL

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Ed-PhD@Bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/phd

Summer 2004

All teaching and support staff
[Name of] School
[address]
[address]
[City] [postcode]

Dear Colleague

Thank you for taking part in this research project, which explores mainstream staff views on schooling for disabled children. Please note that in this project the term 'disabled children' refers to any child whose educational provision calls for arrangements over and above those ordinarily made in mainstream schools for the majority of children; some people prefer the term 'children with special educational needs'. At a time when inclusion is high on the local and national agenda, it is vital to seek the views of those who have to put policy into practice. In other words, everybody's voice needs to be heard. Thank you for sharing *your* point of view through the short questionnaire attached.

The LEA has indicated that research findings will be used to inform the development of inclusive policy and practice in [name of LEA]; research findings will be published in a PhD thesis and shared with the LEA and all participating schools. Please rest assured that confidentiality and anonymity will be safeguarded at all times. All information gathered during the course of this project will remain anonymous, be kept in a secure place and only accessed by my two supervisors and myself. School names will not be disclosed at any time; any report stemming from this project should render it impossible to trace any comment to a particular individual. I understand that by completing the questionnaire you are indicating your consent to participate in this project. This research project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and has been designed to cover all primary schools in [this] LEA.

Please remember that this exercise is only meaningful if each questionnaire reflects the views of one person only; I would be grateful if you would answer the questions before discussing them with anybody else. When you have completed your questionnaire please seal it in the envelope provided and hand it to the designated member of staff. I would appreciate if you would observe the return deadline of Friday [date]. Please feel free to e-mail me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk, should there be any issue you want to discuss.

Many thanks in anticipation of your time and contribution.

Yours sincerely

A Sakellariadis

Artemi Sakellariadis (Mrs)
Doctoral student

APPENDIX C7
Survey cover letter for Headteachers

University of BRISTOL

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Ed-PhD@Bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/ph

Summer 2004

[Headteacher's Name]
Headteacher
[Name of] School
[address]
[address]
[City] [Postcode]

Dear [name]

Many thanks for agreeing to take part in this research project. Please find enclosed [number of] copies of the short questionnaire, each with a letter and envelope (for confidentiality). These are for all teaching staff, including yourself, and non-teaching staff who support children's learning (typically LSAs). I would be most grateful if you would ask staff to fill in their questionnaire and seal it in the envelope provided; and if a member of staff could collect all sealed envelopes by [date] and return them to me in the Freepost envelope provided. Please feel free to contact me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk if there is anything you wish to discuss.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your and your colleagues' contribution.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis
Doctoral student

APPENDIX C8
Survey cover letter (second version)

University of BRISTOL

Graduate School of Education
8-10 Berkeley Square
Bristol BS8 1HH
Telephone +44 (0)117 928 7008
Fax +44 (0)117 922 5563
Ed-PhD@Bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/ph

Summer 2004

[Headteacher's Name]
Headteacher
[Name of] School
[address]
[address]
[City] [Postcode]

Dear [name]

Further to my letter of 9 June, and as I have not yet managed to speak to you, I have taken the liberty of sending you these questionnaires on staff views on inclusion, in order to give staff maximum time to respond before the closing date of 5 July. This is entirely on the understanding that if you do not wish to contribute to this project you will bin these papers. Being a teacher myself, I *do* know how dreadfully ill-timed this is; my hope is that people will find 5-10 minutes to express their views on inclusion, at a time when there is LEA interest in these.

Please find enclosed [x] copies of the short questionnaire, each with a letter and envelope (for confidentiality). These are for all teaching staff, including yourself, and non-teaching staff who support children's learning (typically LSAs). I would be most grateful if you would ask staff to fill in their questionnaire and seal it in the envelope provided; and if a member of staff could collect all sealed envelopes by Monday 5 July and return them to me in the Freepost envelope provided. Please feel free to contact me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk if there is anything you wish to discuss.

Thank you very much for considering to contribute to this project.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis
MPhil/PhD student

APPENDIX C9 – Reported advantages of special schools

First reported advantage of special schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	adult : child ratio	57	17.3	18.7	18.7
	trained staff	89	27.0	29.2	47.9
	physical resources	49	14.8	16.1	63.9
	funding (overall)	10	3.0	3.3	67.2
	modified crclm / no exams	23	7.0	7.5	74.8
	complement Mainstream	19	5.8	6.2	81.0
	child not feel isolated	11	3.3	3.6	84.6
	other	2	.6	.7	85.2
	tailor-made environment	45	13.6	14.8	100.0
	Total	305	92.4	100.0	
Missing	System	25	7.6		
Total		330	100.0		

Second reported advantage of special schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	adult : child ratio	44	13.3	17.1	17.1
	trained staff	84	25.5	32.7	49.8
	physical resources	57	17.3	22.2	72.0
	funding (overall)	8	2.4	3.1	75.1
	modified crclm / no exams	15	4.5	5.8	80.9
	complement Mainstream	8	2.4	3.1	84.0
	child not feel isolated	10	3.0	3.9	87.9
	other	7	2.1	2.7	90.7
	tailor-made environment	24	7.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	257	77.9	100.0	
Missing	System	73	22.1		
Total		330	100.0		

APPENDIX C9 – Reported advantages of special schools (continued)

Third reported advantage of special schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	adult : child ratio	26	7.9	16.3	16.3
	trained staff	23	7.0	14.4	30.6
	physical resources	20	6.1	12.5	43.1
	funding (overall)	4	1.2	2.5	45.6
	modified crclm / no exams	21	6.4	13.1	58.8
	complement Mainstream	19	5.8	11.9	70.6
	child not feel isolated	20	6.1	12.5	83.1
	other	14	4.2	8.8	91.9
	tailor-made environment	13	3.9	8.1	100.0
	Total	160	48.5	100.0	
Missing	System	170	51.5		
Total		330	100.0		

Fourth reported advantage of special schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	adult : child ratio	1	.3	9.1	9.1
	trained staff	1	.3	9.1	18.2
	physical resources	1	.3	9.1	27.3
	funding (overall)	1	.3	9.1	36.4
	modified curriculum / no exams	2	.6	18.2	54.5
	complement Mainstream	2	.6	18.2	72.7
	child not feel isolated	2	.6	18.2	90.9
	tailor-made environment	1	.3	9.1	100.0
	Total	11	3.3	100.0	
Missing	System	319	96.7		
Total		330	100.0		

APPENDIX C10 – Reported advantages of mainstream schools

first reported advantage of mainstream schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	correct in principle	89	27.0	30.3	30.3
	prepares for future social interaction	12	3.6	4.1	34.4
	role models	100	30.3	34.0	68.4
	other adv for disabled children	29	8.8	9.9	78.2
	adv for non-disabled peers	37	11.2	12.6	90.8
	other	23	7.0	7.8	98.6
	Total	4	1.2	1.4	100.0
Missing	System	294	89.1	100.0	
Total		36	10.9		
		330	100.0		

second reported advantage of mainstream schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	correct in principle	43	13.0	18.5	18.5
	prepares for future social interaction	11	3.3	4.7	23.3
	role models	19	5.8	8.2	31.5
	other adv for disabled children	18	5.5	7.8	39.2
	adv for non-disabled peers	57	17.3	24.6	63.8
	other	73	22.1	31.5	95.3
	Total	11	3.3	4.7	100.0
Missing	System	232	70.3	100.0	
Total		98	29.7		
		330	100.0		

third reported advantage of mainstream schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	correct in principle	18	5.5	17.5	17.5
	prepares for future	5	1.5	4.9	22.3
	social interaction	3	.9	2.9	25.2
	role models	9	2.7	8.7	34.0
	other adv for disabled children	25	7.6	24.3	58.3
	adv for non-disabled peers	28	8.5	27.2	85.4
	other	15	4.5	14.6	100.0
	Total	103	31.2	100.0	
Missing	System	227	68.8		
Total		330	100.0		

fourth reported advantage of mainstream schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	correct in principle	1	.3	33.3	33.3
	role models	1	.3	33.3	66.7
	adv for non-disabled peers	1	.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	3	.9	100.0	
Missing	System	327	99.1		
Total		330	100.0		

APPENDIX C11 – Poem received from participant

A Poem for Professionals

Don't be afraid of us
Don't hide behind your long words, your leaflets,
Your assessments and committees
Come out from behind your forms and telephones

Listen to us, talk to us, see us, touch us.

He is my son, she is my daughter
He is your child too.

Keep your labels for your homemade wine
She is my flesh and my blood
He is my love, my destiny
Don't be afraid, he is your child too.

We know you don't have all the right answers, nor do we.
But together we can ask the right questions.
What does he need? How can we help her succeed?

Help us to ease our children into the future
Don't be afraid, he is my son, she is my daughter.

He is your child too.

APPENDIX D1
Letter of informed consent (Welcome Park)

Graduate School of Education
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www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/p

March 2005

All members of staff
Welcome Park Infant School
[address]
[address]
[City] [Postcode]

Dear all at Welcome Park Infant School

It was lovely to meet many of you at the staff meeting earlier this term; many thanks for agreeing to contribute to my PhD research project. This part of the project focuses on two schools in [this] LEA and aims to illuminate the perspective of mainstream staff with regard to schooling for disabled children.

As we discussed, I anticipate having a conversation of about half an hour with each member of staff, to explore your experiences and thoughts on schooling for disabled children. As a token of appreciation for your time, I am offering half an hour of my time back to each of you. I would be most grateful if you would allow our conversations to be recorded on audio tape and shall seek your personal permission for this when we meet. In order to protect your identities I shall transcribe and anonymise the tapes as soon as possible (typically within a day or two) and use pseudonyms for every person and every school involved; all research results will be reported in a way that conceals the identity of people and places.

I would also be extremely grateful if I could spend some time in one class; perhaps two half days a week for a term or so. This would help me develop an awareness and appreciation of life in a mainstream classroom as this unfolds and becomes your lived experience. Please remember that this is solely an opportunity for me to share some of your experiences and see things 'from the inside'. I am happy to help in the class I'm visiting and therefore much prefer to be seen as a pair of hands than a pair of eyes!

Please remember that all of the above remains negotiable for the duration of the project. Participation is voluntary and the option to withdraw at any time will be available to each individual until submission of the thesis (September 2006).

Finally, in line with the qualitative research design I am following, it is my intention to offer opportunities for you to be further involved in the meaning-making process of this project, should you wish to. For example, I shall give each of you a summary of our half-hour conversation and you may choose to comment on this; or you may later wish to comment on draft extracts of the thesis or other publication. My intention is to share these documents with you and welcome your feedback. The actual level of your involvement is entirely your decision!

Please feel free to contact me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk should there be any issues you wish to discuss further. I would be grateful if the content of this letter is communicated to all members of staff and if one copy is signed by the Headteacher or a suitable representative of the school and returned to me in the envelope provided.

Please accept my humble apologies for the delay in this letter reaching you. Many thanks to those of you who have already shared your thoughts with me, thank you very much in advance to all the rest of you in anticipation of your contribution, and special thanks to Rachel for her kind hospitality. I shall look forward to seeing you all again after Easter. I hope you and yours have a pleasant holiday.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis
PhD student

Statement of Informed Consent

I have read the above, communicated this information to all staff at Welcome Park Infant School and agree for the project to proceed.

Signed ..... Date .....

Please print name .....

APPENDIX D2
Letter of informed consent (Friendlymead)

University of BRISTOL

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Ed-PhD@Bristol.ac.uk
www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/doctoral/ph

June 2005

All members of staff
Friendlymead Infant School
[address]
[address]
[City] [Postcode]

Dear all at Friendlymead Infant School

It was lovely to meet many of you at the staff meeting earlier this term; many thanks for agreeing to contribute to my PhD research project. This part of the project focuses on two schools in [this] LEA and aims to illuminate the perspective of mainstream staff with regard to schooling for disabled children.

As we discussed, I anticipate having a conversation of about half an hour with some of you, to explore your experiences and thoughts on schooling for disabled children. Every person's individual perspective is a valuable addition to this research, so I have chosen not to set a limit to the number of such conversations. I am fully aware, however, that all staff have many calls on their time and contributing to this project may not be everyone's priority. I shall be offering half an hour back to every member of staff who makes time to talk to me, as a token of appreciation for your time. I would be most grateful if you would allow our conversations to be recorded on audio tape and shall seek your personal permission for this when we meet. In order to protect your identities I shall transcribe and anonymise the tapes as soon as possible (typically within a day or two) and use pseudonyms for every person and every school involved; all research results will be reported in a way that conceals the identity of people and places.

I understand from our recent conversations that it is not currently feasible for me to help out in any of your classes. Should it become a possibility in the future, I would be very happy to discuss this with you again. I hope you will not mind me clarifying here that the thinking behind this suggestion was that it would help me develop an awareness and appreciation of life in a mainstream classroom as it unfolds and becomes your lived experience. But I do appreciate that this is not possible at the moment, and would like to thank you for having considered it.

Finally, in line with the qualitative research design I am following, it is my intention to offer opportunities for you to be further involved in the meaning-making process of this project, should you wish to. For example, I shall let each of you have a summary of our half-hour conversation and you may choose to comment on this; or you may later wish to comment on draft extracts of the thesis or other publication. My intention is to share these documents with you and welcome your feedback. The actual level of your involvement is entirely your decision!

Please remember that all of the above remains negotiable for the duration of the project. Participation is voluntary and the option to withdraw at any time will be available to each individual until submission of the thesis (September 2006).

Please feel free to contact me at artemi.sakellariadis@bristol.ac.uk should there be any issues you wish to discuss further. I would be grateful if the content of this letter is communicated to all members of staff and if one copy is signed by the Headteacher or a suitable representative of the school and returned to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you very much in advance to all of you who consider offering half an hour of your time to make a contribution to this research. I shall look forward to seeing many of you in the days and weeks to come.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis
PhD student

Statement of Informed Consent

I have read the above, communicated this information to all staff at Friendlymead Infant School and agree for the project to proceed.

Signed ..... Date .....

Please print name .....

APPENDIX D3 – Example of entire interview transcript

Interview one at school one: Monday 7 March 2005, 12:15-12:45
Tom (teacher, fifteen years' experience)

A: Right. So basically we're talking about disabled children in mainstream schools and what I'm really interested to hear from you today is your own take on it, your own perspective, your thoughts, your views, your experiences and perhaps more importantly how you make sense of them. How you make meaning out of what happens in school, out of school. I prefer to let you talk without me interrupting; I might ask for some clarification here or there, but I'd rather not interrupt, I'd rather you work your own way of telling me what you want to say.

T: Right. Do you mean just physically disabled children?

A: Well physically disabled as well, yes, but if you remember when I came and talked to all the staff we were talking about anybody who either has a statement or has some... It's very difficult defining these things isn't it, some disability, although I'm not quite sure I like the term, that makes either learning or being hard or different for them than the norm.

T: Well it's one of those issues that is very hard to be kind of, you can't in a way be against it, but on the other hand, it doesn't really work for some children. And I have had direct experience of children who are failed by the school. That our school has not met their needs. And it has been distressing for the child and for myself and for the child's parents and for other children. We had enormous difficulty about four or five years ago, with a child who we'd had since reception, and I was teaching in year two, he'd gone the whole way through the school and he got into the year two class and he still basically couldn't speak more than two words, write a single letter, he couldn't go to the toilet independently, and he couldn't, he had no way really of communicating with the other children or playing with them. And in the class, he had a statement but it was a statement that didn't give him adult support all the time, so virtually most of the afternoon he was just left on his own. And he cut all the wires on the computer, he cut all the wires on the tape recorder, he was just endlessly disappearing and you couldn't take your eyes off him for a minute. And he wasn't like being naughty or anything, it was obviously something seriously wrong with him and no one, ever, told us what it was. We never ever got anything to sort of give a description other than it was severe learning difficulties. Well to my mind, I felt that he must have been brain-damaged in some way. And, the most ridiculous thing of all was when we had an enormous battle with the Local Education Authority who insisted he did the SATs. The Key Stage One SATs on the basis that every child had the right to do them. And we were pointing out, well he will just cut the papers up, he can't write his name, this is just a farce, it's a nonsense, why can't you just listen to what people say. And in the end we managed to get a sort of withdrawal from it but it took an enormous battle and it took an enormous amount of paperwork and, just a feeling on our part, on my part, and on the Head as well, that we were living in some kind of Kafka-esque nightmare world, where just the obvious things that stare people in the face are just ignored. You know you're living in some sort of other reality where children just plainly are just not capable of doing these tasks, they're so completely inappropriate and wrong, under some kind of notion of equality, or fairness, or political correctness, that they're supposed to go through this nonsense.

A: Yeah. Well this SATs thing it sounds as if yourselves and the Authority were almost speaking a different language.

T: Well we were! We were speaking a different language. No, no one from the Authority ever took any interest to come and actually see this child, we did invite them, and just to say that "do you want to actually come and see it?", his parents didn't want him to do the SATs, you know, the

Educational Psychologist actually thought he shouldn't do the SATs, but it was just the Local Education Authority pushing through this absolute rubbish.

A: Could you tell me a bit more about this kind of disparity of opinion?

T: Well there is a lot of stuff around the talk of inclusion, and you end up feeling often that as a teacher, you are made to feel that it's your fault. If it's not inclusive and you are saying well it's.... I think inclusion is a difficult word. Because for some children I think inclusion is the worst form of exclusion. Because whereas they might be included in some way in that they're in your school and they are on the register and in the classroom but they are actually excluded in the sense that their needs cannot be met by the people who are doing it. To me it's a form of cruelty!

A: Mmm, there's certainly a lot of talk about that [inaudible]

T: And that is something that I don't feel there has been a proper debate about, or discussion with teachers in the schools at all, it's just been announced we're now inclusive, everyone is inclusive, you have to be inclusive and, there we go!

A: That's essentially what this project is trying to address. You said a little while ago that you're made to feel, as a teacher, as if it's your fault. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

T: Well I think most teachers will say that from their experience of most difficulties that you face in the classroom. In terms of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, because you're not pitching the work at the right level. If you just did it a bit like this, you did it a bit like that, so there has always been a culture I think, people higher up the Authority, don't want to take responsibility for the problems that many children have in this society. It's very easy to just dump it all at the feet of teachers in the classrooms and say if they were better teachers there wouldn't be any problems!

A: So was that where you feel that the criticism is coming from?

T: Yeah, and I think it's the same with inclusion. You know the fact that you don't actually have to be very cynical to work out that you know maybe a lot of this is about saving money. Closing down institutions, getting rid of staff. Whose best interests are actually at heart? Is it the best interest of the children or is it about saving money? So, having said all of that, I mean there are children that we have in the school that have fitted in very well and it does work well with them. You know by instinct I'm an inclusive person! But what I cannot stand is inclusion just being used as a thing to put children in there without the resources, without the proper backup, without seriously listening to what people are saying and then taking their views seriously, and not just making sort of silly judgments about things.

A: Right. So, if it were up to you, if you were the person holding the strings, what changes might you make to make this thing work?

T: Well for a start I think I would make sure that, say for a child who's blind like we have a blind child now in the school, I would make sure the school had every facility that he needed or she needed that they would have got in a separate school, a school for blind children. Because I've seen what they have in the schools where it's set up specially for blind children. And what we provide, is nowhere near as good. It doesn't have the space, it doesn't have the quietness and it doesn't have the level of expert teaching that he would have had in a separate place. I mean none of us can teach Braille, the teacher he has working with him all the time doesn't know Braille, and he has a specialist teacher that comes in, I am not sure of the details but once a week or something. Whereas I've seen units

where they have their own computers, like their own sensory areas etc etc etc. And now we're supposed to have recreated all of that in a classroom of 30 children and the classroom is already overcrowded. There is no space for that kind of stuff! So even though the children respond really well to this kid and I think he's benefiting, gaining a lot from school, I think also his needs aren't actually been properly met. And, yeah, so, if I was holding the strings I would first of all make sure: well what is the best provision that is available to meet that child's needs? And then make sure that they are put into school before it is called inclusion.

A: So for this particular child, you would perhaps find a way to have extra space, resources,

T: Extra space, yeah. If they need an extra room, the LEA should provide an extra room; and if there isn't space they should build one! Literally you know, even if it's just putting a Rover cabin or something there, but saying "This child needs this. So we'll provide it."

A: So would that be what you would consider the best, if one can ever consider what is best?

T: In principle I agree with the idea that all children should be educated together. And they shouldn't be in separate institutions stuck miles away so you never meet disabled, in a sense, you know, of physically or mentally handicapped, or whatever phrase it is, which is what used to happen. I think it would be better if people were together but, the way it is happening here, is not at all the way it should happen. It's about saving money by closing down places and not meeting children's proper needs, and not giving them the proper provision.

A: Can I take you back to this statement, this was one of the first things that you said, you said that you can't be against it, in principle you are for it. It may appear that I am asking you to state the obvious, but tell me a bit about how you think about that.

T: Because I think all the children learn from each other and one of the benefits of having a whole range of different abilities of children, and physical, mental problems, is that children learn tolerance and understanding of each other. And that is to the benefit of all, including the staff. But if on the other hand you feel that you're just struggling with the children that you- and you can't look after them properly, you can't educate them properly, it actually has, and I've seen it, it can lead to resentment. From what the parents of other children are saying, or what the teachers say, that you are having to spend far too much time with that child, and you know you hear them say but you can't blame them, they've got to do it but it's not fair in our children. So, you're getting all those kind of problems. So, yeah.

A: OK. You've talked to me about one child, you know you'd call it a story were inclusion did not quite work out OK, but you said you've had other stories from within the school that things have worked. Could you give me an example, just talk me through something that worked well?

T: Well it's not being a child particularly with physical needs but children with learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties which I think are very borderline as to whether they should be in mainstream schooling. Where, you know you have been able to, I think actually by enormous effort on behalf of the teachers and other staff, actually rearranging the curriculum a bit, rearranging the classroom, trying to get extra help, doing different things, managed to make it work! And again I'd say no thanks whatsoever to the Local Education Authority.

A: Is there a particular instance that you can talk me through?

T: Well a child who's on the autistic spectrum, where [we] kept trying to get a statement, he never got a statement, but everybody felt he should have had a statement, well eventually he did get a statement when he went to the Junior School which often seems to be what happens that Key Stage One is... Children who are identified from very early on as having needs, they kind of hold off on the statement, they want to save money. But it gets to a point where they know it, it can't carry on like it was. But I just think well if they'd done what they should have done in the first place, the child would have had a lot better experience in the Infants School. But we do cope with them and we do include them, and we do our best to make sure that they have a happy time.

A: So this particular child went through the school without a statement

T: Yes

A: And the school... I'm just trying to build a picture in my mind of how it was for the child, for the school, for the child's parents...

T: Well there's been more than one like that! In Reception you often find the teachers are reall- go "How can we cope? How can we cope?" they're going- And you see the kid, they stand out as different from the other children. Running around in Assemblies, you know the teachers tearing their hair out, kids kind of getting labelled I suppose a bit, and then you know, actually, you just try your best to kind of cope with them. At the same time as making all the appeals to, you know, Educational Psychology Services, the rest of it to say you know we think there's a problem here how can you help? And they'll come in and they'll make an observation after about three months and then go away again. And come back next year. And make another one, and then go away again and that's it! No help. (Laughs) So teachers, I think they just use their own imagination, creativity and patience and resources to cope. And that's really it.

A: Yeah. I know what you're saying, I have been in classrooms and I am a teacher myself but it would help me if you could pretend you're talking to a moron and tell me what's a typical day in the life of a teacher who does have to make all these allowances without any extra support. What does this teacher have to do?

T: Well, basically, they have to have worked out a complete range of strategies to sort of cope with one child, his needs, so that they don't disrupt all the other children's needs. It's like trying to get a balance all the time. Because, obviously, we are supposed to meet everybody's needs. So if one person's needs are totally dominant in terms of the amount of attention they require, you have got a very difficult problem. So it's often, you work out what does that child particularly like to do which would keep them quiet while I can concentrate on settling down the other children so they can get on more independently with what they are doing, and then you know, so maybe if it's a child that likes going on the computer, they would tend to spend a lot of time on the computer, because it's keeping them quiet. And then when you have a moment to try and sort of do more of what they need to do, because you've had the chance to give your attention to the others, then you can say "Well, would you like to come and do this now? Would you like to try and do that?" So a lot of the time you feel actually they are being fobbed off a bit because, you know I've never been sure of this: at this age if that's what they really want to do, and it keeps them quiet and happy then maybe it is what they ought to be doing too! So I'm not sure. But I'm sure that if OFSTED and people come in, they wouldn't be happy. I think that's how a lot of these children's needs are met

A: If you were Mr OFSTED and coming to...

T: Well, I'd find it very difficult to be Mr OFSTED because I think it's so easy to kind of be judgemental: you should do this this this and this, but in reality how you actually do it is totally different isn't it?

A: Yeah, I'm thinking of a different context where you're not being judgemental but you are let's say appraising what goes on

T: If I was appraising it, I think I know for a fact for myself, you say each child has an Individual Education Plan and all the rest of it, which is supposed to meet their special needs, but it's impossible to do it. It's a nice piece of paper, but no one can do that every day. You know, you've got Individual Education Plans and you've got 30 children, you have to teach children as a class, the children have to work in groups, they have to be independent, they have to do this and that you don't have the staffing levels, you know anything, just to give individual attention to children in this way. It's just not possible. And that's what these children need. Which is why they've got special educational needs. I think before they were in these special schools whatever they were in much smaller classes with much more individual attention. That was presumably because that's what they need. Now, you can't just take that and put them in a class of 30 children and get the same level of attention. To meet their needs. It's just not possible.

A: The Authority would probably turn round and say: "but we sent you an LSA."

T: Mmm, that's not quite the same as it?

A: No...

T: I have a great deal of respect for LSAs and everything else but, quite often you don't have an LSA for one child, and also there's many many children in the classroom who also have special needs which aren't even recognised. And no human being could just sit there and say: "well I'm just working with this child and ignore all the others!" And also, I think often these children need the most experienced, trained teachers and not the least experienced and the least trained people to work with them.

A: Yeah, you are not the first to say that. Absolutely. So where does that leave us? In principle, as you say you can't be against it; in practice, there are all sorts of difficulties. We talked about the LEA, support, resources possibly not there, at an adequate level, SATs, the tension within each teacher's remit of providing for all children. Where does that leave us?

T: Well I think, I think it leaves schools in a very difficult position. Because we are now trying to straddle so many contradictions. I mean we want to be an inclusive school and we are becoming an inclusive school but we also judged primarily, externally, by our results!

A: League tables...

T: That is the first thing that is looked at, the first bit of the OFSTED report and all the rest of it. If you are an inclusive school, because you are taking children with learning difficulties and all the rest of it, your SATs are going to go down. So you're going to be penalised on the one hand for being an inclusive school. That's the first contradiction! And it's absolutely there it stares everybody in the face. And what's going to be done about that? The other contradictions are all around what we've already talked about, how to balance impossible pressures really against each other, in terms of quite rightly parents are demanding more time, well every parent wants you to spend more time with their children. And quite rightly. So they do get upset when they see there

are certain children who demand far more attention than others. So that presents us with a big problem. And a very hard one to answer. All round I think again it's not been thought out properly. And as a policy, as to how to implement a fully inclusive integrated education. it needs to be thought out far more carefully in terms of resource implications, and the best for the needs of the child. And I do have, this is outside of the school, but I have a friend whose daughter is profoundly deaf. And had enormous problems with their Local Education Authority, about getting their daughter properly looked after at school. Because they kept on banging on about inclusion and this girl had been in her primary school, she was deaf since birth, but then she pointed out you know, she has never been invited to a birthday party of any other child in the class. Now tell me how is that inclusive for her? And I think no one really had even particularly thought about it. it's that they can't talk to her! Because she can't actually hear! So, it's very difficult for her to make friends. And so, when she goes on to secondary school she is just going to get lost. She's actually quite a bright kid. And she ended up with the Local Authority basically accusing her, taking an absolutely foul position against her, of saying all kinds of things about their family. Because she wanted the Local Education Authority to pay for her daughter to go to school specially for the deaf. And they just refused to do it, in the end she took them to court and she won! So the Authority has had to send her to a school for deaf children and she is now much happier! So to me, I mean that was an example of how, this is a parent with a child who has been in a mainstream school so-called inclusive, was thoroughly excluded by the process, was victimised by the Local Authority for trying to get the best thing for her child and had to go through the courts, enormously stressful, won, and her child is now happy because they're not in an inclusive setting!

A: Yeah. Well that is one of the contradictions, isn't it? On the one hand you want to include everybody, on the other hand it is practically very difficult to do that! So, I don't want to sound provocative, but why don't we just say: "well, sorry, we've tried; it doesn't work, we can't do it."

T: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean is that a way forward do you think?

T: I think the way forward is what I saw [abroad] actually. We are part of this community project where we link up with other schools, we've been to [names the school] which is one of our partner schools in [foreign country], and what I saw there I thought was inclusion. And they have children who have to come in special ambulances, they're terribly physically disabled; children are blind, deaf, all sorts of problems, and there is a whole floor of this school, you know it's a big big school,

A: Are we talking special school or mainstream school?

T: No mainstream school, goes from 6 to 16. And they have a whole floor of the school which is for these children. And, you know, with special ramps in and it's got like sensory floors, and it's got all kinds of equipment, that you sit here thinking this is rid- we've got nothing like that here. And the children are included in that they go into school meals together and they go into the playground together with their carers, they go into some lessons but not other lessons etc etc. So it is kind of like the facilities for their needs are on the site, in the building, so the children are not hidden away in some other place. And the children know each other but they have separate lessons for certain things, within the building. For example, I was talking earlier about this blind child, they had a room about this size, which has got things all round it that you can touch and you can feel. And some of the other children would go in there with him at times, so it's not just the blind kid that goes in there, but two or three of his friends so they can play with the things as well in there. You know and it's just a totally different experience I think, I would look at that as a model. And say "well

why don't we start looking at the best provision you can see in Europe", there is some there. and start thinking "well how can we implement that?" Rather than this just kind of, to me it is haphazard, it doesn't even seem to work the same across each Authority. So I mean it's not like there is a national programme for this, it's just hit and miss! You know some people do a bit of it. some people don't, I mean apparently some Authorities are keeping open some special schools and closing others, some are closing them all, so what is the directional philosophy behind all of this? Other than, you know if you dare criticise it you kind of like you are a really nasty person.

A: Incriminated

T: So uhm, that's what I think of it.

A: Thank you. No, thank you that is very very helpful. We are going to run out of time in a minute. What I'll do is I'm going to transcribe all of this with my fancy software that it won't take too long[1] and try and come up with what seems to me to be an adequate summary of all this, and then I'll let you have a copy of that. And it's completely up to you whether you want to read it, bin it, comment on it, whatever!

T: OK, sure, yeah.

A: Anything else that you feel that we might have missed, before a switch off?

T: No, no, I think that sort of covers it, you know, really!

A: OK, well thank you very much for your time, I will switch this off. How about that? 29 minutes!

[1] Before beginning to record we had had a brief chat about recording and transcribing interviews; he had spoken of his experience and I had said that the equipment I am using considerably cuts transcription time

APPENDIX D4

Example of interview summary letter

Date: 22 March 2005

Dear Tom

Thank you for finding time to talk to me about inclusion recently. Given that sharing one's thoughts on a complex issue within limited time is far from straightforward, I thought you might be interested to see my résumé of that conversation.

You seemed to be saying that in principle one cannot be against inclusion, although in practice it does not work for everyone; indeed it could be seen as a form of cruelty if children are not fully part of the school they are attending. You identified a number of contradictions in implementing inclusion: schools still being judged by SATs results; the use of IEPs and the amount of teachers' time needed to plan and provide for *all* the children in their care; the experience and training of all staff who support children's learning. For inclusion to be effective you seemed to feel that more resources and support should be made available to mainstream schools, while communication and liaison between schools and the LEA should be considerably improved. You referred to inclusion policies as having appeared without adequate consultation or debate and possibly serving strong money-saving agendas. Finally, when I asked for your views on a way forward, you spoke of one of your partner schools abroad where you have seen a well resourced special unit within a mainstream school.

I hope this resonates well with you. Please feel free to comment on this résumé, but only if you want to. Needless to say, if you would like to see the transcript of our entire conversation you are very welcome to a copy; just let me know! Thanks again for your time and your contribution. I hope you and yours have a nice Easter.

Yours sincerely

Artemi Sakellariadis
PhD student

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